

IGLOO STORIES



by
CLARENCE HAWKES
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IGLOO STORIES



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SIX TALES OF ESKIMO LAND

By

CLARENCE HAWKES

*Author of "Peep," "Dapples of the Circus," "Pal-o-mine,"
"Patches," "Jungle-Joe," etc.*



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DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THOSE
BRAVE MEN, WHO, TAKING THEIR LIVES IN
THEIR HANDS, ENDURED EVERY KNOWN
HARDSHIP IN THEIR PUSH FOR THE TOP OF
THE WORLD, IN BEHALF OF SCIENCE AND
HUMANITY.



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ESKIMO LAND



Igloo Stories

ESKIMO LAND

Eskimo land is a portion of that desolate frozen northland lying approximately between the fifty-fifth and seventieth degrees of north latitude. A land to which white men only penetrate when in search of gold, or adventure or discovery.

Scores of brave men have risked their lives and fortunes in search of the two poles, in the past, but today much of the glamor as to the poles has disappeared because of the discoveries of Peary, Nanson, Scott, Byrd, and others. In all these adventures into the frozen north the Eskimo has played an important part. He has often been the white man's guide, doing his hunting and driving his dog sleds, and most of the stations for the polar expeditions have been maintained by the Eskimo. So it will be seen that he has played an important part in the white man's polar expeditions as well as in his quest for gold and polar animals.

The Eskimo dwells in a low hut, the framework of which is built of pieces of timber that he gets from the wash of the sea, while his clapboards and shingles are sods, which he is very careful to make

weatherproof, if possible. There is quite a close parallel between the beaver's mud hut, and the igloo of the Eskimo.

The entrance to the igloo is a long dark tunnel, perhaps fifty feet in length, so when the Eskimo enters his house he pops up from beneath the floor very much like a jack-in-the-box.

The windows of this primitive house are membrane, and while they do not do as well as glass, yet they are surprisingly transparent. But the Eskimo is not so dependent on his windows as is the white man, for his winter is just one long night, so he cannot get very much light at the best.

The sleeping benches are located on the side of the igloo opposite the entrance, and are always generously furnished with warm furs, the long coated hide of Omingmong, the musk-ox, being the most highly coveted bedding in the igloo.

The lamp, called nan-uk consists of a stone jar filled with seal oil, and the flame is fed by a moss wick. The walls of the igloo are hung with hunting equipment, such as spears, harpoons, knives and guns, with which latter weapon the modern Eskimo is fairly well supplied. The long whip which the Eskimo driver cannot do without is also kept handy, for the dogs are often quarrelsome in the winter, or if they are hungry, and the driver may have to sally forth almost any time and restore order in the pack with the long whip.

The clothing of the Eskimo is made of furs for

winter use, and cheap calico, bought from the trading posts, for summer-time. The Eskimo's hunting shirt is lined with auk skins with the feathers inside, so it makes a very warm garment.

It is a great day for the children when Father Eskimo sets up his nets on the top of a high hill and the spring capture of thousands of auks begins. The children also like to help in searching for ducks' eggs on the islands where they go in their oomiak, or family boat for summer fishing. These eggs are cached, and often not used until mid-winter. During these summer fishing trips tons of cod are caught and dried in the sun, and made ready for winter use, both for man and the dog teams.

Although the Eskimo's life is hard, and a continuous struggle to subsist, yet he has a very soft spot in his heart, and this is for his children. In the igloo the child reigns supreme. No matter what his transgression, he is never punished. Nothing in the igloo is too good for him. Both the life of Father and Mother Eskimo is one long struggle to make the children warm and comfortable, so Mother Eskimo tells the children tales and folk lore, and Father Eskimo entertains them with thrilling accounts of the hunt, thus giving color to what would otherwise be a rather colorless life.

There are six Arctic animals which play an important part in the life of the Eskimo, and with which most Eskimo children are very familiar.

They are Niksuk, the seal, who furnishes much of the Eskimo's food and blubber; Iwok, the mighty walrus, whose flesh, blubber, hide and tusks, are all valuable to the Eskimo; Omingmong, who furnishes the very warmest robes for the sleeping benches; Nawook, the polar bear, who follows the ice-floe just as the Eskimo does, and whose white robe often adorns the igloo. Hunting him furnishes the most hazardous sport that the primitive Eskimos follow.

Tarhedneah, the fox, whose pelts are valuable to the Eskimo in barter, and Oskooa, the wolf, who is just a menace, hated by Eskimo and Indian alike, for he often prowls about the igloo seeking by his hideous night howling to coax away the dogs that he may eat them, and thus delete the dog teams.

Since these six animals form an important part of the background of the Eskimo's life, this volume deals entirely with them.

In these six stories I have sought to picture for my reader the scenes and action which are so well known to Eskimo children.

By the reading of this book I am in hopes that you will find your interest and sympathy quickened towards these children of the snow, whose lives are so different from those of white children, although through it all they manage to smile and be glad.

CHAPTER I

NIKSUK, THE BEAUTIFUL

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NIKSUK, THE BEAUTIFUL

At the very beginning of my story, Niksuk, the beautiful, was a seal pup, only two days old. He was lying asleep in the warm sand on the southern slope of Seal Island. His mother had gone to sea to fish leaving him alone, although he was a mere baby. He did not mind being alone because, as I have already said, he was asleep. Niksuk's mother knew that she must eat much fish now she had a baby seal so that she could nourish him. So she fished much of the time during the first few weeks of Niksuk's life.

Niksuk was as white as snow, and nearly all head, or rather, his head was out of all proportion to the rest of his body.

His eyes were very large and beautiful and they looked at everything with a wide wondering stare. His body was so soft that he would have squashed in your hands if you had been lucky enough to take him up. But no boys but Eskimo boys have ever handled a baby seal, as they live far from civilization.

Niksuk had for legs queer little flippers, two in front and two behind, the hind flippers being much longer and stronger than those in front. In time

these flippers would become very strong and he would be a great swimmer.

But just at present Niksuk was a great sleeper and a great eater, and the rest of his life he did not worry about.

He was lying on the first terrace of warm sand next to the sea. This narrow stretch was sacred to the pups, here on Seal Island. The next higher shelf was occupied by the yearlings. They were several times larger than Niksuk.

They had also shed the pure white coat of the pup for the gray of the adult seals. The yearlings, very proud of their twelve months of life, looked down upon the pups. They were playing like so many boys, tumbling each other about and engaging in sham fights. These sham fights would all too soon become real fights, but now it was all in good nature. On the third shelves were the two year olds. These in turn looked down on the yearlings and would have nothing to do with them, except to occasionally shove them about when they got in their way. The two year olds had come to look very much like full-grown seals, and they felt more important than they ever would again.

On the last shelf of sand were the bachelor seals called holluschickie, three and four years old, or even older. These were all the male seals who had not mated. It was from their ranks that the great seal hunting companies each year took their terrible toll. Each year they saw tens of thousands of

their members driven away over the hill towards some long low buildings. Those who remained behind always watched for the return of their fellows, but they never came back.

So it behooved one, if he was a bachelor seal, to take a mate as early as possible, before it came his turn to be driven over the hill. The female seals were never driven away in this manner, because it was against the law.

Niksuk's mother had gone to sea to fish and left her pup lying in the sand with ten thousand other seal pups.

As far as any human eye could see, they were as much alike as so many peas. The great question was how all those ten thousand seal mothers always know their own particular pup. And yet they do. Dame Nature has given the wild creatures a wisdom that confounds the wisdom of man. So Niksuk's mother could come jumping like a boy playing leap frog straight to her own particular pup. She never made a mistake. Neither did any of the other ten thousand mothers; for each of the seal pups knew and answered its mother's bleat.

The reason why Niksuk was white as snow, while his parents were gray, was that he was protectively colored. Much of the time while he was still very young he would lie in the snow, or on the icefloe. So nature had made him white like the snow, in order that the bear, the fox, the wolf and other

enemies might not find and eat him some fine day while his mother was away fishing.

By the time Niksuk was two months old, he had learned to jump about on his strange flippers. So now he could visit other seal pups when his mother was gone away. Sometimes when the pups were asleep having a fine nap, the yearlings would come jumping down the sand dunes going to the sea to swim. Then they would push and tumble the pups about to get them out of the way. This would make them grunt and cry out. But the yearlings did not hurt them. The two year olds were even more rough, and the pups were very much afraid when they saw them coming.

It was not many weeks before Niksuk could amuse himself with many strange things that he found all about him. There were queer pebbles and strange shell fish which he found in the sand along the shore.

One day he climbed upon a flat rock too close to the water and fell in. It was rather deep on the further side and Niksuk would have been drowned, had not something happened. He had not yet been taught to swim, and his mother had cautioned him not to go near the water until she gave the word.

The thing that happened was this. Niksuk's father, old Seafoam, who was the most terrible fighter on all the island happened along at just the right time. He saw Niksuk's plight and pulled

him out. He held him in his teeth and, before setting him down, shook him severely and growled in such a deep voice that poor Niksuk was nearly frightened out of his skin. But just as he thought he would die of fright, his mother came along, and the next day he got his first lesson in swimming.

They did not venture very far from shore, for she merely wanted to get him beyond his depth and teach him to support himself. At first he made very bad work of it. His head constantly went down and his little flippers came up, but by degrees he learned to keep his lungs filled and his head above water.

Then he was taught strokes with his flippers. But learning to swim as gracefully and rapidly as a seal swims is a fine art, and it was not until several months later that Niksuk was finally perfected in it.

He liked the prickle of the salt water on his skin and thought it great fun to ride in on a wave and feel the wash of it as it landed him and rolled him out on the sand, or, if it was a very high wave, to feel it roll him over and over. He also learned to duck when he saw a comber coming, and let it go over his head. Finally when he could swim quite well, his mother took him far enough from the shore so that he could feel the mighty swell of the ocean and taught him to lie upon the crests of the waves rocked in the mighty, slow moving cradle of the Pacific.

There was one dread enemy which Matka, his mother, early warned Niksuk against, and that was the killer whale. This dread monster would swim in quietly near to the shore and lie for hours watching for the baby seals and the holluschickie, or bachelor seals.

When little Niksuk could swim well his mother taught him how to fish. She showed him where the cod and the halibut could be found and how to tear certain other sea food from its places of hiding on the rocks. Soon he was able to forage for himself.

There were many strange people in the great sea, some of whom lived near to Seal Island, so Niksuk gradually came to know them all. The largest and the ugliest was Clam-eater, the walrus. The seals felt themselves much superior to Clam-eater, because they lived on fish, while he could only dig clams. Then there was the sea leopard. He was very much like a seal only much larger, and his flippers were longer and stronger. He could travel on land much faster than a seal, and his teeth were larger and stronger.

The sea-bear and sea-wolf were also rather terrible, but Niksuk did not see much of them until he was older.

The sea-otter they also saw occasionally, but he was much smaller than the rest of these strange sea people, so they did not associate much with him.

Most of the birds Niksuk also knew, the half

dozen species of gulls which were always wheeling about the island and screaming; the kittywinks and auks, as well as the slow-flying albatross and the seahawk, which they occasionally saw out at sea.

Thus it was that little Niksuk grew and became wise after the way of seals until he was six months old. Then he noticed one day that there was much excitement among the seals on Seal Island and he asked Matka what it all meant. She told him in seal language that the great seal family was preparing to swim away to the south, just as they did each October. She said that the old males like Seafoam, would go first, then the mothers and the babies would follow, and finally the holluschickie, so that by the end of October Seal Island would be deserted as far as the seals were concerned.

At this news Niksuk was much excited. He had never been more than five or ten miles away from Seal Island and the mere thought of swimming away for hundreds and thousands of miles in the great Pacific, fairly made his tail tingle and his flippers twitch.

"When will we go, Mother?" he asked.

"Tomorrow, I think," she replied. So little Niksuk made his last round of Sea Island for that season, and he was so excited that night that he could not sleep.

When the morning light came again, Seal Island was fairly alive with the migrating seals. There

were not only thousands, but hundreds of thousands, all scrambling and pushing down the slopes of the island to be first into the water. When they finally swam away, by regiments and brigades, one might have thought that there was nothing in the Pacific but seals. But the Pacific is a great world in itself, and they soon were lost in its immensity.

Little Niksuk was amazed at the vastness of the Pacific Ocean. But many a man has had the same feeling, so why wonder. Niksuk was only a six months old seal and most of the world was new to him. But he did some travelling that winter that would have made the eyes of an old globe trotter green with envy. All the time as they swam he learned of the wide, blue ocean and the strange people who live in it.

First they wandered across the Pacific as far as Samoa, and here they met Sea-cow, the ugliest of all creatures of the deep.

Niksuk was amazed at the sight of Sea-cow and would have cried out something disrespectful, but his mother forbade it.

"Don't make an enemy of any one," she counseled. "You never know when you may need them for a friend."

Sea-cow was from twenty to thirty feet in length. Some of the species are larger and some smaller, but all equally ugly. Sea-cow's body is not graceful as a seal's is. It is stouter and fatter and not so

symmetrical. Sea-cow has no hind flippers, but a long broad tail instead. He can stand erect in the water on his tail. Sometimes a herd of sea-cows will stand for several seconds bowing and nodding to each other. They are very polite among themselves, although they do not seem to have any special manners as far as the rest of the world is concerned.

Little Niksuk and his mother watched the sea-cow feeding, and thought it great fun.

Sea-cow has a very heavy upper lip, which is split in the middle. He can spread this lip apart and then close it over a lot of seaweed and coarse grass such as grows close to the shore. This is nanatee's food, and the reason why he is called a sea-cow.

Niksuk and his mother liked the warm water of the Pacific Islands, but they had to keep forever on the watch for the sharks, of which there are several species such as the hammerhead and the spotted shark that delight their appetites with young seals. In addition to keeping forever on the watch for the sharks, Niksuk's mother warned him never to go close to a ship, and much less to a rowboat, or a launch.

Matka also advised him that man was the very worst of all his enemies, as Niksuk would find out all too soon.

I do not know how many thousand miles Niksuk and Matka swam that winter, but it was a great

many. The mother seal advised Niksuk that she was always on the watch for some island where man, their worst enemy, had never been, and could not come. It was only in such a place that the seal family could be happy.

Most of the South Sea Islands were too warm for May breeding ground, so such an island would have to be further north. They found many islands, but all had their faults. Some had precipitate cliffs along the coast, and they needed sandy beaches and low lying rocks for the nurseries.

On some islands the seals had the mange and Niksuk's mother knew that would not do. There was something about the sand or dirt that was not healthy.

Often they would think they had found just the right sort of an island, then they would stumble upon some trace of man and would hurry away.

So it was that they drifted along the Japan Current early in April. To Niksuk's great surprise he found that they were now joined by thousands of other seals, all swimming northward.

But there were no baby seals among them. All were now yearlings, just like Niksuk.

"Why all this hurry? Where are we going?" Niksuk asked Matka one day. "They all seem to be going our way."

"We are bound for Seal Island," said his mother, "it seems to be the only place. There is something about it that draws us strangely. We will

have to go back and take our chances with man."

Niksuk and Matka did not arrive at Seal Island until the middle of May and when they finally did arrive, they found the island in a terrible turmoil.

Old Seafoam, Niksuk's father greeted them gruffly as was his wont at this time of the year.

"Matka," he said, "I wish you would hurry ashore and see if you can keep order among my eleven wives. You are the oldest and wisest of them all. I have really annexed a lot of silly, foolish females this year, and they are worrying the life out of me. Besides I have a terrible time in getting a good place on the island for our home, and moreover it has nearly cost me my life to keep it."

Niksuk could well believe this. Such a bedlam as greeted his ears he had never heard before.

Imagine if you can, fifty thousand war-scarred male seals, each as used to fighting as he is to breathing. Imagine all this fifty thousand fighting for the best places on the island.

Fifty thousand bulls, all pawing the ground and bellowing and charging up and down, could not have made more noise.

You must not think that it was sham fighting either, although the seal is a rather cumbersome fellow. Old Seafoam could have testified that there was no sham about it, for his neck and sides were literally striped with gashes.

When two male seals fight, they first manoeuvre for position, each keeping his head on one side and

watching his adversary out of the corners of his eyes. Finally the head of one or both shoots out and they come to grips. Their teeth are like the teeth of a dog, and sink deep into their adversary's neck. Then they go tumbling about on the sand and rocks, bellowing and shrieking with rage, and striking each other with their flippers. Finally the hold of one gives way, and they fall apart to spar for position again.

So this was what was happening on Seal Island that May morning when little Niksuk and Matka returned to the spring breeding grounds of the fur-bearing seals.

The roaring, whistling, bellowing, and thrashing of the fighting male seals was so thunderous that it drowned out the sound of the surf. It could be heard for miles to sea above all other sounds.

"Now Matka," growled old Seafoam, "you get rid of this lazy loafer." He was referring to Niksuk. "The seal babies will be arriving almost any day and we do not want him bothering about."

So Niksuk's mother said good-bye to him, and led him away inland to a strip of land which was the playground of the yearlings. He soon discovered several of his half brothers and sisters whom he had not seen since the last autumn.

The following week he went down to the shore to watch the holluschickie dance the wave dance.

It was a wonderful sight, and Niksuk thought

it must be great fun. The dance began just after dark and continued for several hours.

The water along Seal Island is very phosphorescent this time of the year, and the young seals gather by the thousands and tens of thousands and dance in the waves along the shore.

They leap from the water in wild exuberance. They stand upon their tails on the crests of the waves. They splash and tumble. They bow and bend. They leap and fall and then leap again. And all the time dancing, splashing water about them that is like fire. It gleams like gold. It flashes up and dies out; then flames up and again becomes tranquil.

So it was that Niksuk began his life as a yearling. As a yearling he soon found that he was between two fires.

The holluschickie, or bachelor seals, who were still further inland, despised him and would not tolerate him. Neither was he allowed with the babies and the mothers on the sand near shore. So he had to content himself with being a yearling. But since there were tens of thousands just like him, it was not very hard.

So all the summer Niksuk grew and ate fish which he caught for himself and roamed about on the island. He and other yearlings also often swam to the adjacent islands, but these were all crowded just as Seal Island was, so they soon came back.

There were so many interesting things to do upon

Seal Island and on the adjacent islands and in the sea that almost before Niksuk knew it was October again.

Little groups gathered in sheltered places along the shore, and held earnest confabs. Then Niksuk knew that the time for the autumn migration had again come round. At first he was rather sorry to think of leaving Seal Island, but finally his tail began to twitch with the wanderlust and his flippers became impatient. A young female seal, who had been watching him out of the corner of her eye all summer, wanted to go with him. But Niksuk told her gruffly that such travels as he contemplated were not for her, and she had better go with her mother.

So finally Niksuk swam away, and this time he wandered very far from Seal Island. He first followed the coast down to Puget Sound, a matter of three thousand miles, but he accomplished it in about two weeks. He loafed about in the Sound for several days, then pointed his nose west and crossed the Pacific as far as the Sandwich Islands.

He liked the beach here very much as the sand was soft and clean, and the beaches were low lying. But soon the wanderlust seized him again. So he headed back east, going a little to the south.

This brought him out along the Mexican coast, but he did not find any islands here to his taste, so he headed for the South Sea Islands. These islands fascinated him for two weeks; then they

also in turn wearied him, or rather, the wanderlust claimed him and he headed southeast. This brought him out at a very historical island, one well known to young readers. For one morning in March, he was playing in the surf along the shores of Robinson Crusoe's island. He plunged and swam and played on the very beach where Robinson Crusoe rescued his man Friday from the savages. But even this beautiful island did not long hold him, and he headed directly south. In a couple of weeks he came to the land's end known to mariners as the Horn. Here he turned his nose eastward and started to swim through the Strait of Magellan, but the current was swift and the waters seemed strange; and besides it was getting time to turn his nose northward. So he finally gave up exploring the unknown seas beyond the land's end and headed northward again.

It was certainly some swim back to Seal Island, but Niksuk took it leisurely. Thirteen thousand miles as straight as a string, but Niksuk probably made fifteen thousand as he wandered about.

By the middle of May he was back on Seal Island and the seals were just as numerous and the fighting was just as furious as it had been the year before.

One of the very first seals to greet him was the young lady seal with whom he had promised to dance the wave dance. She rather boldly took possession of Niksuk and led him away to dance at

once. So she gave Niksuk no peace. But Niksuk was not ready for spooning. He had not yet seen enough of the world.

Finally after two days, the lady seal returned from a short journey, and brought a holluschickie with her who was larger and older than Niksuk. Before Niksuk's very eyes this seal began making love to the young seal and she pretended to be very much in love with him. This made Niksuk jealous. So he told the holluschickie to mind his own business and let the lady seal alone as she belonged to him.

Niksuk had never been in a real fight in his life, but of a sudden he felt a great rage swell up in him. He had been a very great swimmer. No two-year-old on the island had swum half as far as he, and he was strong. This the rival holluschickie found out to his sorrow.

Niksuk's adversary got the first hold on Niksuk's neck and his teeth sunk deep in the blubber. It hurt terribly and Niksuk roared with pain. But he was also filled with a great rage and he soon shook him off and pummelled him with his flippers and bit him mercilessly. After a little, the lady seal cheered him on and derided the bully although she really had gotten him to fight Niksuk.

Finally the bully limped away torn and bleeding and very much ashamed. Then Niksuk pranced up and down the island, swaggering and offering to fight any two-year old on the sands. But all who

had seen him fight were afraid, so he was left alone after that.

Then the lady seal again proposed that they start a family of their own.

It was during this summer that Niksuk finally found out all about the fate of the holluschickie who went over the hill and never returned, and this made him even more certain that he must find a happy island before he and the young seal were mated.

He never could have found out about the holluschickie had not his father, old Seafoam, told him. At first Seafoam refused to say anything about it. He said that Niksuk would find out soon enough if he persisted in refusing the lady seal. But Niksuk gave him no peace. Every time he saw him he would ask for the story. Finally old Seafoam's patience was exhausted and he told him.

"Your blood is on your own head," he said, glaring at Niksuk savagely. "The sea is full of fools like you, always wanting to find out something that will make them unhappy."

At this point in the story old Seafoam stretched his flippers and went fast asleep. He slept so long that Niksuk thought he had forgotten all about it, but finally Seafoam awoke and glared at him.

"Still waiting for that story, are you?" he asked. "Well, if you must know about the holluschickie, here is their story. I got it many moons ago from

my father. The story nearly cost him his life. Now listen and don't interrupt me.

"When your grandfather was a holluschickie about three years old, he had a consuming curiosity just as you have. Didn't know when to let well enough alone. He also had the mange, which probably came from his curiosity. It struck in and made his blood bad. This was why when the strange creatures we call men came down each day to drive away a hundred or two hundred holluschickies they did not take my father. They would come down just as you see them and rattle two bones in front of a part of the herd and the holluschickie would all go bleating and hopping along ahead of them, as they were afraid of the strange noise.

"They would have been still more afraid if they had known that the bones with which the men frightened them were two neck bones taken from a holluschickie—"

At this sad fact Niksuk's eyes opened widely.

"Oh, you needn't mind a little thing like that. That is nothing," said old Seafoam, with a deep growl. "Wait till I get to the terrible part of the story. By the great jumping sea-serpent I will make your blood freeze. I will make your teeth chatter.

"My father was just as curious and foolish as you; one day when they drove away the holluschickie he persisted in going along with them, al-

though the men did not want him. They drove them very slowly, and half way to the long, low building they stopped and let them rest for a while."

"What was that for?" asked Niksuk.

"Wait and see. You will find out soon enough.

"Well, finally they came to a flat piece of ground in front of the buildings, and a dozen men creatures who walk on their hind flippers came out, and each had a stout stick in his flippers. The end of the stick was very hard and terrible as the holluschickie soon discovered.

"Finally one of the men creatures who had helped drive them up to the buildings motioned to the others, and an awful thing occurred. All of those terrible men began striking the poor holluschickies on their heads. After each blow, with a pitiful bleat, and a kick of his flippers, the holluschickies stretched out dead."

"Oh! Oh!" cried Niksuk. "Did they kill your father?"

"No. But he escaped by a miracle and also because he had the mange. When the man creature came to him and raised his club, he saw how bad his coat was, so he just kicked him with his hind flipper and went on to the next holluschickie. But my poor father had seen enough. He got to his flippers and ran for the shore. And all the way he could still hear the bleating of the poor hollus-

chickie as they fell beneath the men creature's clubs. It was awful."

Niksuk was almost paralyzed with fright, but he went away and told the lady seal that he must search harder than ever for his island where the men creatures did not ever come. So two or three months later, he swam away southward on his quest, and before he went, he promised to mate in the spring.

All through the winter months Niksuk swam and swam.

He visited a hundred new islands, but all had their drawbacks. And all the time that he hunted the terrible story of the holluschickie's rang in his ears. All his brothers were being killed and he could not stop it. It was terrible!

All though that winter he hunted with this great fear at his heart. It made his flippers very strong, and no seal ever swam so far and so fast before. Finally just about the first of May, when he had become discouraged, and was about to give up the quest, he discovered his island.

It was an island that the sea and the coral builders had made especially for the seals.

The island itself was about six miles in diameter and it was covered with beautiful trees inland, and with fine beaches and low lying rocks near the shore. It was an ideal seal nursery. It would accommodate at least a million seals, but the strange thing about the island was that it was guarded on

all sides so that no men creatures could get near it. It had four encircling rims of coral formation, each about fifty feet apart, and for a man it was a week's work to find the way into the island, because the channel was so winding. It took Niksuk half a day himself, and then he lost the way several times. But finally he had the course tucked away in his head, and could swim straight for the open sea.

Niksuk spent a whole day exploring the island to make sure that it was all right. Then he swam away as he had never swum before to find the lady seal and tell her. Now he had found a safe place for her and her pups, he discovered that he wanted her greatly. It had been only his trouble about this island that had kept him from mating with her before.

So I leave them, safe in their Paradise Island, and I also leave my young reader with an interesting problem. If Niksuk and his mate set up house-keeping in the beautiful island in the year 1937, and the man creature does not find them and they are prosperous, how many seals will there be on the island in the year 1950? I am not quite sure myself, but I am certain that their number will be legion.



CHAPTER II

IWOK, THE CLAM EATER



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It was a warm glorious spring morning along the mud flats in a little estuary, leading from Cook's Inlet, on the north coast of the Seward Peninsula. I suppose it was a wonderful spring morning in many places on mother earth, but I mention this spot as it was where the family of Iwok was sunning at the time of my story.

There were three members of this family, a sad remnant of the once numerous and mighty walrus herd. In the old days, twenty or thirty years before, when the gasoline-driven hunting boats had not done their destructive work, these same mud flats would have been inhabited by perhaps a score of these mighty sea folks. But this morning there were only three, a mighty bull, a cow and a calf.

Man's criminal wastefulness and his thoughtlessness of the future have been strikingly illustrated in this sad story of the Pacific walrus. Formerly this huge creature was the chief means of support of several thousand Eskimos. They had hunted the seal, the walrus and other denizens of the frozen north and their igloos had been well filled, and from the hide and bones of Iwok, they had fashioned many useful articles. But now the

United States government had to feed them, and furnish reindeer for their support.

The walrus is probably the most monstrous and diabolical animal to inhabit the domain of man since the prehistoric ages. There is nothing beautiful, or artistic about him. He merely amazes one with his size and repels one with his coarse members.

The mighty bull, the leader of the little herd on the mud flats, was perhaps twelve feet in length, and of great girth. The circumference of his thick neck was easily ten feet, and his mighty head when he rested it upon the ground was as high as a man's head, when standing. His characteristic features were his mighty head, armed with two great tusks perhaps thirty inches long, and four or five inches in diameter at the base. Tusks that would have speared to death any living animal that got in the way. Then the four seemingly clumsy flippers were also like nothing else in the animal kingdom. These flippers were perhaps two feet in length, and very strong, able to crush a whaling boat with one blow, should it land fairly. Then a ridiculous little tail made this monster of the deep even more grotesque. He was covered with a dirty yellow skin or hide, two inches thick in places, and almost impervious to a bullet. This skin alone when removed would weigh two hundred and fifty pounds. It was warted, and seamed and covered with the mud and grit of many days.

The cow was very much like the bull only a little smaller, while little Iwok was a diminutive picture of both his parents. But he was even more shapeless than they and resembled a bag of bran with a head stuck on at one end, and a small flipper at the four corners. So it will be seen that little Iwok was not much to look at. His sire, the mighty bull, would have weighed perhaps a ton, while little Iwok would have probably weighed one hundred and fifty pounds. Yet to his mother who hovered about him constantly, he was probably the most beautiful creature in all the world. She was as watchful and solicitous for him as a heifer for her first calf. So it will be seen that the mother love ran just as pure in the coarse veins of the walrus mother, as in a beautiful doe.

The walrus family were alternately sleeping and feeding this warm spring morning. If sleeping they were stretched out on the flat rocks along the shore, or if feeding they were digging in the mud for clams, for Iwok is a clam eater, although any small crustation which he can find slips quickly down his wide throat.

Little Iwok was not interested in clams, so he nursed his dam when she was still so that he could. He nurses, under the water, as does the small hippopotamus. This fact was not known to science until a hippopotamus was born in a circus and observed.

Just how many clams the bull ate in a day is a

question, but it was probably enough for much clam chowder for humans.

Although the walrus is very clumsy on land he is very agile in the water and a dangerous adversary when wounded or infuriated.

He will not molest man if let alone, yet the bull will defend his family with his life, just like any other red blooded male.

This first summer was a wonderful time for little Iwok, because it was the season of his calthood. Responsibility for his food and his safety had not yet fallen upon him. He was guarded, and fed by his sire and dam and had not a care in the great sunny wide world in which he luxuriated. He lived north of the Arctic Circle for the better part of the summer, yet it was warm and wonderful and this portion of the earth about him swarmed with wild life. Mother Nature in these northern latitudes seeks to make up in the summer-time for the long dark and pitiless winter, so everything luxuriated and grew rapidly beneath the summer sun on those long Arctic days.

Perhaps the most interesting thing in that wonderful summer was the return of the seal family in May. They had been away in the southern seas since October, while the walrus family had only gone as far south as the iceflow extended. When the seals finally came swimming back by the millions little Iwok's amazement knew no bounds. He had not seen much wild life thus far in his

uneventful life, so his astonishment can well be imagined. Wherever he or his parents went there were always some seals swimming about or sunning on the sand and rocks. The seals did not pay much attention to the walrus family, while the walrus almost ignored the seals once their curiosity had been satisfied.

The sea-cow and the sea leopard were more nearly in the walrus class as they were much larger than the seals, but these rare animals did not very often venture on the mud flats.

The birds were also very much in evidence.

The gulls which nested in all the cliffs along the shore were always circling and wheeling about and screaming. The little auks were even more numerous than the gulls, if possible, White Arcticgeese sailed serenely overhead.

Blue fox came often to the seashore from his den inland to dig clams and hunt for small crustations. He also appeared sometimes upon the iceflow where he was looking for a seal pup.

The polar bear, Silver King, often appeared on the iceflow, too. In fact, he usually followed it north and south just as the walrus family did. Whenever this dangerous hunter appeared both the bull and the cow were very watchful. They did not so much fear for themselves, but they knew full well that a polar bear can make a good meal on a walrus calf.

Little Iwok's first narrow escape was from the

killer whale, a most dangerous fish, who hunts small seals near the shore. The killer whale is armed with a mighty sword with which he can strike a blow that will cut asunder almost anything of his size that swims. The only skin that is at all proof against the mighty blows of the killer whale is the thick hide of Iwok.

The walrus family had been peacefully sleeping upon some low lying rocks on the mud flats, when Mr. Killer Whale came along. He was not looking for walrus, but seal. The seal, however, were not in evidence and the walrus family was there, and what was more to his liking, little Iwok was swimming about a few yards away from his dam while she slept upon the rocks near. By some rare good fortune, perhaps it was just luck, the walrus calf espied the killer whale in time to avoid his first rush and swam bleating to his dam. Her bellow of fear awoke the sleeping bull, and with a great splash and a resounding bellow of rage, he plunged into the water to do battle. Little Iwok, the innocent cause of all the commotion slipped behind his dam, who in turn retreated behind the protecting bulk of her mate. Usually a killer whale does not come to grips with a bull walrus, but this one was fearless and he did not appreciate the fact that the bull was well flanked by the rocks from which he had sprung. He also had his hind flippers braced against the rock and this gave him just the position he wanted to repel an attack. So the

killer whale charged full at him hoping to frighten the cow or the calf away from their defender. But unfortunately for him he got in too close, and before he could retreat, the bull had delivered a terrible thrust with his great tusk, which was buried nearly its length in the body of the great fish. The killer whale churned up the water like a mill race thrashing about and trying to get free from the great tusk, while the bull pummelled him furiously with his four flippers. They were in a death grip. The whale could not get away so the bull pummelled and pummelled with his flippers. The water all about them was soon boiling and seething and red with blood. Little Iwok imagined that all the terrors of the deep had been loosed, and he and his dam fled to a quieter spot. Finally, after perhaps ten minutes, the killer whale ceased to struggle and the bull was enabled to withdraw his tusk, which had done its deadly work, for the killer whale was dead. Then the bull swam about bellowing and giving himself all sorts of airs, celebrating his victory.

The next hungry hunter to try his luck at bagging little Iwok was Silver King, the great white polar bear. Silver King, his mate, and their two white cubs were, like the walrus family, following the ice-floe northward. The bear family were going northward because the seals were travelling in that direction. There is nothing more appetizing to the hungry palate of a polar bear than a seal

pup. But the seals were not as numerous as the white bear would have wished and they were hungry on this spring morning when they spied the walrus family. Perhaps, too, Silver King was urged on in this hazardous undertaking by the adventure it offered. Maybe he wanted to match his wits and his strength against that of the old bull. So as soon as he caught sight of the walrus family he began considering a plan for stalking the calf. The patience with which he worked would have amazed a human being, for the patience of the animals put to shame that of a man. The time, the place, and all other conditions must be just right. A strike at the wrong moment would be fatal, and it might cost Silver King his life. No one knew better than he, for he had an ugly scar on his shoulder deep down under the thick coat, which he had carried ever since he was a two-year old. It had been given him by a walrus bull and had nearly cost him his life so he watched and waited and abided his time. Finally the conditions were just right. He was on the lee side of the walrus family. The booming of the nearby surf was making a great noise so they could not scent or hear him. The cow was sleeping and the bull was nowhere to be seen. That was ideal, so Silver King began swimming slowly towards the unsuspecting calf, with just the tip of his nose showing above the water. When he was within a hundred feet of the calf he sank from sight and did not

appear again until he was within fifty feet of the calf. Then the muzzle again disappeared. Little Iwok did not even dream of danger until he was seized by the great jaws of the white bear. He had just sense enough left to utter a terrified bleat as the white hunter drew him under. It was enough for the cow who plunged into the water with a wild bellow of fear and rage. She at once divined the way the bear had gone and started swimming rapidly after him, but he easily kept out of her reach. The fate of little Iwok seemed sealed. He was being rapidly borne away in the strong grip of the best swimmer among quadrupeds. What could save him?

It was just a great piece of good luck for the calf and a bit of hard luck on the part of the bear, that he was swimming with the calf directly toward the old fury, the walrus bull, who had heard the cow's call for help and was coming across the ice as fast as his clumsy flippers could carry him. The white hunter was so intent watching the pursuing walrus cow that he did not even remember the bull, and so he clambered upon the ice with little Iwok just as the bull reached the water's edge. The bear had been so frantic to escape the cow that he ran almost into the furious bull. His surprise was so great and he was so taken off his guard that he loosed his hold on the calf, and that terrified young walrus dove like a stone as far down in the water as his pudgy bulk would permit, while the

old bull charged straight at Silver King. The great bear was furious at having lost his prize just as he had been about to escape with it, but he had no mind to try titles with the furious bull. So he quickly slipped out of the monster's reach and soon clambered upon the ice at another point and disappeared in the distance while little Iwok and his deliverer went back to the cow in triumph.

This terrible experience taught little Iwok a much needed lesson and after that he was always on the watch himself and was never caught in that way again.

The following week the walrus family followed the ice-flow through Bering Strait into the sea to the north. They even went far beyond Point Barrows and beyond the furthest land inhabited by Eskimos, so they were comparatively safe for that summer.

Finally in the late summer little Iwok learned to dig clams and other crustations and feed for himself. He had greatly increased in weight and strength so he was no longer the helpless calf he had been, but a bulky, burly fellow, who thought he was some fighter himself. He would, if the occasion offered attack a female seal, and drive it out of his way. But the second spring again found him with his parents well down in Bering Sea enjoying the luxury of the warm spring sun. His nose would have now been broken if he had possessed

such a feature for there was another walrus calf, who had taken his place at his mother's udder.

But little Iwok was not destined to be jealous of the new calf, for the walrus family fell victims to some Eskimo hunters and little Iwok alone escaped. The Eskimo had come down to the mouth of one of the Alaskan salmon rivers which emptied into Bering Sea. But as soon as they discovered walrus signs they forgot all about fishing, and like the children that they were, went after the walrus family.

Iwok's sire and dam and the calf were sleeping peacefully on some rocks close to the shore not even dreaming of danger. Little Iwok himself was swimming about nearby when his sharp ears caught the soft swish of a paddle. The kayak was very close to him, else he would not have heard the sound as the Eskimo paddles very quietly. Little Iwok turned sharply in the direction of the sound and saw the strange thing with the man in it and in his hand was a poised harpoon. The young walrus had just presence of mind enough to dive and this saved his life. After waiting for several minutes for him to reappear, the Eskimo paddled softly toward the sleeping bull and cow. Little Iwok had not really been worthy of his harpoon, but he had seen him first. The yearling finally came up to breathe behind a rock perhaps a hundred and fifty feet away. Here he could watch and not be seen. He did not like the looks of the kayak

creeping stealthily toward his little family, but what could he do? He was afraid of the strange thing, besides it was between him and the rest of the herd, so he watched and waited. Presently the kayak came within striking distance and the Eskimo carefully poised his harpoon. He could not well miss the bull but he wanted to spear him in his fat neck, in a vital spot. When the harpoon struck the roar of pain and rage that his sire gave frightened little Iwok out of what sense he had left. He saw the kayak which slipped swiftly away. The Eskimo in the kayak had no mind to come to grips with a walrus bull so he fled. But his harpoon had been firmly attached by a long leather thong to a float, which trailed after the walrus bull, so no matter where the bull swam, or where he went, this tell-tale float would follow upon the surface of the water telling of his whereabouts.

After the Eskimo had eluded the bull he came back again and sank another harpoon in the walrus mother. He then went ashore for the rest of the party in order that they might follow up the adult walrus for the kill. They soon appeared in a large square ended boat, called by the Eskimo a woman's boat. They first crept up on the bull and stuck two more harpoons in him and also filled him with rifle bullets. He charged them again and again, but they always just eluded him, although the boat had several narrow escapes. Little Iwok watched

from a distance. He had never seen his sire in such a rage, or in such distress. Finally, that portion of the fight was over and the Eskimo turned their attention to the cow. She was much easier than the bull, and as the calf clung close to her side he was also dispatched.

At this point in the hunt little Iwok concluded he had seen enough of the terrible sights and swam far out to sea and finally took refuge on an island where he lived for a time. But he never saw any of his family again from that time on. He lived by his own wits and protected himself as best he could.

At first little Iwok was lonely, and he missed his parents very much. He would even have welcomed the companionship of the new calf, whom he had despised a few days before, but even that was denied him. It was very lucky for him that much of his time was spent in hunting food. Before, his parents had done that for him, or rather he followed in their lead and fed where they did. He had learned the important lesson, that man was his very worst enemy, so now he shunned the sight and sound of man, and kept as far out of his way as possible.

An urge which was much wiser than he soon told him to go north. The water around his island was entirely free from ice and he was much too conspicuous in open water. Perhaps the first trip northward which he had made when he was a calf

gave him the clue for this trip, but it is more likely that it was the primal instinct planted deep in the consciousness of the walrus that told him to go. So he followed the ice northward. Once again he went through Bering Strait and into the Arctic Ocean to the north. Away beyond the habitation of even the Eskimos. Iwok wandered and spent a pleasant summer, but in these northern latitudes the summers are very short as well as very beautiful, so soon ice began to form again and Iwok once more went south. He arrived at the seal islands along the Alaskan coast just as the great annual seal migration began. So he was soon left all alone upon the islands. He spent the winter digging in the shallows for clams, where the water was open. There was always open water if he went far enough to sea. The tides and the breakers could always be depended upon to keep certain channels open.

With the coming of the second spring a strange new restlessness seized Iwok. It caused him to travel hither and thither looking for something, he knew not what. Around and about he swam, visiting all the small coves and also swimming far to sea. It was nearly a month before he discovered what it was for which he was searching.

Finally one spring morning he came rather unexpectedly upon a heifer walrus of about his own age. He greeted her with a bellow and she responded with a glad loo. Iwok was about to swim

closer and make her acquaintance when a furious raging bull came swimming from behind a rock nearby and charged full at Iwok. As he was fifty per cent larger than Iwok the latter fled in great panic.

Iwok saw several other young female walruses that spring whom he would have liked for his mate, but all had been spoken for, and although he fought more than one battle for the possession of a mate yet he was always defeated and driven away disconsolate. Ordinarily he would not have mated until the third spring, but Iwok was lonely. The truth was the Pacific walrus was becoming very scarce where it had once been numerous and that was why poor Iwok could not find a mate.

He finally followed the ice-flow northward again and spent a solitary summer all by himself. The only unmated walrus that he saw that summer were yearlings, and he looked upon them with disdain and they in turn were quite terrified at the sight of him.

So once again in October he was back in Bering Sea living his solitary life and fighting the battle for existence just as his kind had done for untold ages.

That winter was a rather pleasant one for Iwok. He had become self-reliant, and of great size, although not full grown. He would not get his full growth until his fourth year, but he was by this time a very formidable hulk. The dangers of

the sea no longer terrified him as they had done since losing his guardians. There were few of the monsters of the deep that swam near the shore that he was afraid of. So he came and went very much as he pleased.

The following spring the mating urge seized him again, and he quested afar and near for a mate. Once he fought a terrific battle with an old bull who was five hundred pounds heavier than he. He was so battered up by this fight that he gave up the mating quest for that spring and swam away northward alone.

So being without a mate he wandered and dug clams and hunted alone all through the summer. But this unnatural life was beginning to shape Iwok's disposition. The walrus is not quarrelsome or dangerous if let alone. But Iwok became a sullen fury. For it seemed to him that the whole army of sea folk were against him. If he had more to do with his own species it would have been different. The life as the head of a walrus herd would have made him look more favorably upon all life that swam in the great Pacific. But he was an outcast, a bachelor walrus. He was different because he belonged to no one and no other walrus belonged to him. So he became the great lone walrus bull of the Bering Sea. A terror to all other walruses and to the seals that swarmed on the sea islands in the spring and swam away in the autumn. No one was glad when they saw Iwok appear, and

no one was sorry when he disappeared. In fact most everything that swam in Bering Sea feared the sight of him.

Thus seven years, each very much like the last, went by. Each spring the lone walrus bull passed up through Bering Strait to the Arctic Ocean, and each autumn he swam back to Bering Sea. He dug clams and nosed among the seaweed. He ate small crustaceans of all sorts. He bullied the seals and chased them wherever he would. Once he fought a terrific battle with a sea leopard, who is very much like a seal, only much larger. This dangerous fighter can travel much faster on the land than can a seal, or a walrus, and he punished the bully badly. But Iwok finally killed him and ground his body into the mud. Then he bellowed mightily and floundered up and down seeking for more worlds to conquer.

By the time that Iwok had reached his seventh year he was the largest walrus bull that ever swam in Bering Sea. His weight was probably a little over a ton. He was heavier and harder because of the fact that he had never mated. And he was even more hardy than the rest of his species if possible, because he had been a lone bull and had fought his way under all conditions.

He had experienced more than one close call from the hunters. Twice he had been harpooned and had broken away. Once he had charged a solitary Eskimo in a kayak and had overturned

the small boat and killed the hunter. So while he had been often sighted by the Eskimo yet he had always escaped thus far. But stories of him had spread among the natives. Several Eskimos who had seen him at close range said that he was as big as a mountain. Others said that his tusks were as long as a sledge, while still others maintained his flippers could crush a walrus skin boat at a single blow. Thus a sort of halo had gradually gathered about Iwok, until he had become almost as a character in the mythology of the superstitious Eskimo.

Very few of the wild creatures who live in the regions where men come and go, if they are of commercial value, die a natural death. Most of them sooner or later die a violent death at the hands of that most insatiate slayer, man. So it happened with Iwok, the lone bull, the terror of Bering Sea.

Away to the north of Point Barrows is a little settlement of Eskimos. So far as I know this settlement is the furthest north of any settlement inhabited by men, either civilized or uncivilized. These Eskimos were the most primitive of all their race, as they had not come in contact with the whites so much as their kinsmen further south. In the summer-time they traveled a few hundred miles to the south to fish for salmon and in the winter they journeyed back to their headquarters in this furthest north settlement.

In the autumn of which I write they found themselves back in their winter quarters with a very scant supply of winter food. They had reached the Salmon River too late to get the run of salmon and had almost no dry fish. The caribou had not travelled their way so they had no caribou meat. Seals had been scarce. Ducks and geese had not come that far north in their usual numbers, so they had no eggs cached for winter use. Altogether it was a bad outlook. Starvation, that grim specter which is so terrible in any place, stared them in the face. Starvation is even more dreadful in a country where food keeps out the cold and keeps up the resistance against it. The men went on long hunting trips but returned empty handed. They set traps but deep snows came and nothing was caught. Finally they began eating their dogs and some of the dogs went mad from starvation. Little children wailed pitifully in the igloos for food, which their parents could not give them.

The Eskimo father is devoted to his family. He will endure hardships and take risks for those he loves which would put a white man to shame. Often in his hunting he will sit before a seal's breathing hole in the ice for hours watching and waiting with harpoon in hand for the coming of Niksuk. He will sit like a statue when it is so cold that he has to lash his knees together with a leather thong to keep them from shaking so that he will not scare the seal when he at last appears. He will

tramp all day with half-frozen boots and cold stiffened clothes. He will go for days without water, simply eating snow and gnawing frozen meat. All these things the Eskimo father will endure for his family. But even so, the hunting and the fishing and trapping sometimes all fail, and the dread specter of starvation slinks like the white arctic wolf at the mouth of the tunnel to the igloo. So it did at the little Eskimo settlement furthest north.

Finally the last ditch was reached and four of the best hunters set out for a last hunt. They took just dogs enough for one team and left the rest for food. Two hundred miles to the south they had the good luck to happen upon a mighty bull walrus who had delayed his migrations southward. It was Iwok, the lonely terror of the Bering Sea. Perhaps it was a divine providence that had caused him to linger after all the other walrus had gone south. Anyway he had stayed, and thereby was hope of salvation for the starving Eskimo village.

In his younger days Iwok would not have been caught napping as he was this time. Formerly he would have been on the watch, but he had been so great a bully for so long a time that this fact had made him indifferent to danger. He had fought and bullied the rest of the walrus of Bering Sea; he had terrified the seals, and made all the other smaller creatures swim for their lives so many times that he had come to think that he was

unconquerable, and invulnerable. His great strength could vanquish any enemy and his tough hide could withstand any attack.

He was feeding near shore when the Eskimos first espied him and they kept very still and watched. Soon he came in still nearer shore and stretched himself out on some rocks to get what little warmth there was in the sunlight. He made a fine target and two of the Eskimos crept out carefully on the ice and plunged their harpoons deep in his neck before he even suspected their presence. With a bellow of rage which could have been heard a mile away Iwok plunged into the water by the rocks, and swam straight at his assailants. They, on their part, struck two spears deep in the ice on which they stood and prepared to hold the great beast at any cost. Seeing that he could not get at them, Iwok swam straight away from them, and he soon came to the end of the leather ropes which they lashed to each harpoon. He strained upon these ropes mightily. The spears in the hands of the desperate hunters bent frightfully and they expected the ropes to give way each moment. For several minutes Iwok strained with all his strength and then he came raging and roaring back to the ice to get at his assailants, but he could not reach them so he plunged into the deep water again.

But the harpoons in his neck were beginning to tell upon him. He was bleeding so freely that the water all about him was red. He could not pull

with his full strength because the harpoons bit so. This was why he did not break the ropes, which he could have snapped like thread if he had been given a fair chance. Again and again he tried to get at his assailants, once rearing his great head within ten feet of them, but they met him with two more deep biting spears and this still further sapped his strength. Finally he began to weaken and the inexorable ropes slowly drew him closer and closer to the ice. His great strength slowly left his mighty body, his vision failed, his hearing no longer registered sound, and the great dark and the quiet sleep drew him to them, and he lay still at the edge of the ice, as dead as his sires who had succumbed to harpoon and spear before him.

Then the four Eskimos rigged a rude double pulley and although Iwok weighed more than twenty hundred, in an hour's time they had him high and dry upon the ice. At the sight of the great kill lying helpless and motionless upon the ice the six huskies who had been watching with wolf eyes nearby went food mad. The Eskimos tried to drive them away from the carcass by beating them with their spears, but they soon saw that it was useless. The dogs would have meat if it cost them their lives; so they cut off some of the coarser meat and gave it to them. The Eskimos themselves ate the raw blubber as they worked. They ate and ate until it would seem that they would burst, and still they kept on eating. Finally they cut up as

much of the meat as they could pack on the sledge and carry on their backs and cached the rest in a natural cave near the shore and turned their kayak northward toward their winter village.

The half a dozen lean, famished huskies which had not been eaten were the first to discover the returning hunting party. They ran barking and snapping at the kayak. The men tried to beat them off with their spears and harpoons, but seeing it was useless they finally threw them small strips of the blubber. Famished, hungry-eyed mothers next attacked the store of fresh meat and tore savagely at the pieces which the men proffered them. Then they rushed, crying and laughing, into the igloos to tell the famished little children that good eating was at hand.

Soon blubber was bubbling and simmering in the stewpots over the stone lamp, and men, women and children were eating the raw meat as fast as they could cram it into their mouths. The gray wolf of famine had prowled so long outside the igloo, hunger had gnawed at their vitals so long, they were so cold for lack of food which is fuel in these cold climates, that they had reverted to the animal state, and they ate like wild beasts. They ate until they could eat no more; then all lay down and slept. When they had slept they awoke and ate some more and then slept again.

The four famous hunters made four trips to the place of the kill and finally brought the whole of

the mighty walrus to the village, so they escaped the clutch of starvation until they got government help.

But I hear my reader lamenting, you have sacrificed the hero of your story. You have caused him to be killed and eaten for food. Yes, that is so, and it has ever been so since God first gave man dominion over the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air. Man, the lord of creation has ever slain and eaten the animals and birds as necessity arose, and it will ever be so until he learns to live without meat.

CHAPTER III

OMINGMONG, THE MARVELOUS



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Little Omingmong was born early in June upon the desolate, treeless barren grounds near the Arctic Circle. A more lonesome birthplace could hardly be imagined, but to the musk-ox calf it was home, and home is always the best place in the world, no matter how desolate it may look to those who do not know it.

A few of his family have been captured since 1900, and kept in captivity, but they do not live long, and strange to say, many of them die of pneumonia, the disease of all ailments that we would least expect them to have.

When little Omingmong's proud dam had finally licked him dry, and he was able to stand upon his rather wobbly legs, it is probable that the musk-ox mother thought him the most adorable little creature in the whole world.

The mother musk-ox herself was not beautiful so what could she expect of her offspring? If I were to describe her in one word, it would be "strange." The musk-ox in its looks, appearance, and habits of life is the strangest of all horned creatures.

The mother musk-ox would have stood perhaps four feet at the shoulders, and from her black,

hairy muzzle, to her insignificant tail which was only three inches in length and nearly hidden in the long hair of her coat; she was about six feet. This long coat so hid the real shape of the body as to make it seem like a huge, fluffy bulk, rather than an animal form. This coat was perhaps a foot in length, and rather coarse on the outside, but near the skin it was very soft, woolly and thick, so that wind and cold could not reach her. Her rather slender legs were partly hidden by the long coat, which in the winter time would brush on the snow as she walked. Now it hung in ragged patches, for she was shedding it, and getting ready for the new coat which would replace the old one during the summer months.

But little Omingmong's coat was all of it soft, for he had just the short thick coat which grows near the skin. Later on he would grow the coarse thick coat when he needed it for the winter blasts.

Although little Omingmong was born just south of the Arctic Circle, yet on this June morning life was stirring on every hand. The auk, the white Arctic goose, Brant's goose, and the ptarmigan, were all astir thinking of the nest and the brood which was to be reared. Upon the barren grounds in every direction, the creeping willow was in blossom, and filling the air with its pungent scent. Delicate wild flowers bloomed in generous profusion. Strangest thing of all, the coloring of the wild flowers in many cases was quite brilliant.

Little Omingmong's dam was very careful not to let his sire see too much of him for several days after his birth, for this old musk-ox might even go so far as to kill him since he was a male.

Little Omingmong's sire was a mighty bull among musk-ox, and the leader of a herd. He was something of a tyrant and a bully, and rarely was his authority questioned. He was considerably larger than the cow, and would have weighed perhaps six hundred pounds, which is the limit for a male musk-ox. His horns were very large and curved upward at the point in a menacing manner. These same sharp horns often stood the little herd of fifteen musk-ox in good stead.

Little Omingmong had a very pleasant and comfortable summer that first year, for he had no responsibility, his mother doing all the thinking and guarding for him. She saw as well as she could that he kept out of trouble, and as he was always by her side that was rather easy.

But little Omingmong did think the world was a very hard place when millions of small flies descended upon him in the summer-time and nearly worried the life out of him. They finally stung his eyes so badly that he was nearly blind, and the only way he could go about was by sticking so closely to his mother's side that he could feel her. By the middle of the summer he had increased his weight considerably. When he was born he had weighed perhaps forty pounds, but he grew rapidly

during the summer. Just before the first frosts came he had learned to browse for himself on the more tender lichens and mosses, and this was the beginning of his battle with stern nature, for it was to be his lot to battle with the elements and eke out a living where any other known animal would have starved. That is why I have called this story "Omingmong, The Marvelous."

In the year 1900 Commander Peary shot a musk-ox at the most northerly land in the world, northern Greenland, at eighty-one degrees north latitude, and within nine degrees of the pole. This specimen was sleek and well nourished.

To feed as the musk-ox does in captivity upon clover, hay, and raw carrots and potatoes is one thing, and to paw away the snow and dig up half frozen creeping willow, saxifrage, and mosses is quite another. Yet the musk-ox soon dies in captivity, or at least he does not live out his appointed time, while in the Arctic waste he lives until he either falls before the firearms of the Eskimo or white man, or is dragged down by the white wolf.

Little Omingmong's first adventure of a serious character came early in October. He had begun to feel his importance by this time, and was also just a bit wilful. So he did not stick so close to his mother as he had previously.

The first snows had now come, and the feeding was not as good as it had been in the summer-time. This meant that the herd must work more hours in

the diminishing sunlight to get their necessary feed. The real hard times had not yet arrived, but there was just a few inches of snow.

Little Omingmong's mother did not watch him now as carefully as she had when he was smaller. So this was how the lone white wolf crept upon him and nearly got him.

They were grazing near some large boulders, and Omingmong's mother had passed around on the further side, and the calf was sniffing about examining the sides of a great rock, when a scent came to his nostrils, which filled him with fear. He had never smelled it before, and did not know what it was, but he knew it for a scent of menace. He was gazing wildly this way and that, when a great white wolf appeared at the other end of the boulder, within twenty feet of him.

Immediately on seeing the calf the white hunter went tense and his fangs were bared. He also began creeping carefully forward. This was enough for the calf, and with a frightened bleat he fled to the side of the rock where his dam was. Luckily for them both, his sire was also feeding near, otherwise it might have gone badly with the cow and calf.

With a bellow of rage the great bull charged and the white hunter fled ignominiously.

This was little Omingong's first introduction to the great white Arctic wolf, but it was not his last meeting with that dread hunter.

Another stirring scene that filled the calf with fear occurred a few days later. This was when a rival bull sought to wrest the leadership of the herd from little Omingmong's sire. Up to that time the calf had supposed that all authority was invested in his sire as a matter of course.

So when one morning a rival bull came up to the old leader and began pawing the snow before him and bellowing defiantly, the calf was greatly astonished. At first the old leader paid no attention, but the other finally became so defiant that the leader could not but notice him.

At first he looked at his rival in a distant, scornful manner, but seeing this had no effect, he also began pawing the snow and stamping and bellowing. Finally they came together like two battering-rams and each bent low, planting his hoofs firmly in the snow in order to get a good purchase. For nearly a minute they stood thus, each pushing with all his strength, but finally the old leader began to bear his rival back. Faster and faster he pushed him backward, until at last the younger bull lost his footing, and the old fighter rolled him over and over in the snow. He stamped upon him with great rage and might have killed him had he not tired of the game after a while and disdainfully left his vanquished rival.

As the winter came on and the snow grew deeper and deeper, little Omingmong soon saw that life was not all as pleasant as it had seemed in the

summer-time. Instead it was a continuous fight to keep well nourished, and warm, and out of danger. Sometimes they could find places where the wind had blown the snow away, and by pawing about here they could get feed. But often they had to paw the snow away and then stamp out the feed. They also had to hunt up sheltered places where they could rest out the long desperate storms which often swept the barrens for days. All these hardships and difficulties they could overcome, but there was ever a lurking menace which was even harder to meet. This was the constant dogging and hunting of the herd by the white Arctic wolf. The wolves did not molest them so much in the early winter, for then they could get small game, which was their prey, but when the small creatures denned up, or rarely ventured abroad, the white hunter had to turn his attention to the caribou and the musk-ox.

As soon as he made his appearance the herd at once put a sentinel on guard. This sentry would stand upon the top of some commanding hilltop where he could watch the country for a mile about. If there were several wolves skulking about there would be several sentinels. Then the policy of the herd was also changed. No member was allowed to wander, but all fed in as compact a herd as possible. The old leader enforced this law vigorously. If he saw a cow or a young bull straying away he would drive them back with a great show

of bluster. If a full-grown bull wanted to wander away that was his lookout, but the cows and young bulls must obey the law of the herd. The fear of the cows was transmitted instinctively to the calves, and they all clung to their mother's flanks.

Little Omingmong was much puzzled by this new attitude of the herd for several days, but he finally saw one of the white hunters on a distant hilltop watching them. He at once connected him with the dreadful animal that had nearly gotten him, and then he knew why they were all on guard.

At first there was but one wolf. He was keeping watch over the herd, learning its favorite feeding places, and studying how it might be attacked. But after two or three days two more wolves appeared and finally others, until the pack was complete with seven white hunters. They were planning the battlefield, and wearing out the patience of the foe, before really striking a decisive blow. This is the way that the wolf always hunts quarry that is larger and stronger than he.

At first the circle of wolves which watched the feeding musk-ox kept perhaps a hundred yards away. They merely sat upon their tails and watched. But each day they drew in closer. So to meet this added danger the old leader formed the bulls in a circle with the cows and calves inside. Finally the herd had been compressed to the dimensions that best suited the wolves. They had also managed to drive the herd against some cliffs

that prevented their escaping in two directions. This also helped the musk-ox, as they had not so many quarters to defend. But it made their chance of escape less probable.

At last the cows and calves were pressed together into a solid mass while the bulls stood like a chain of steel on their outer circle waiting with lowered heads and sharp horns for the attack. It was a wild, weird scene, there under the Arctic skies, the windswept desolate barrens, with the glorious aurora dancing in the heavens, and the pale moon and the countless stars pricking through. Dreariness and desolation were everywhere.

For nearly two days the cordon of wolves pressed the cordon of waiting bulls closer and closer against the shivering cows and the bleating calves. Occasionally one of the wolves would dash towards the circle of bulls, seeking to stampede the herd. But he was always met by snorts of rage and stamping hoofs and brandishing horns. One wolf ventured too near and limped back to his fellows with a gaping wound in his side. His companions at once bore him to earth just as relentlessly as they would have a musk-ox calf, and ate him. This was the law of the pack.

But the watchful waiting tactics were telling on the herd of Omingmong. They could not feed and a wolf could go without eating for a whole week. They could not rest. The strain was terrific. Thus the weary hours dragged painfully by. The

white wolves dashing in dangerously near every few minutes and snapping at the muzzles or fore-legs of the guarding, panting musk-ox.

It would have probably taken another day of fighting to have broken the cordon had not one of the younger bulls lost his head, and charged one of the wolves who was more persistent than his fellows. He did not content himself with merely going a few paces as the older bulls sometimes did, and then return to the fighting cordon, but he allowed himself to be drawn a hundred feet away from safety. He was slashing away fiercely at a wolf who kept springing at his head, when another caught him from behind, and with one slashing bite hamstrung him. This spelled his doom, as he could not fight his way back to safety, for, without warning, his left hind leg doubled up under him and went useless. At the same instant that he crippled up behind another wolf got the death-grip at the throat, and he was borne to earth and killed within a hundred feet of the shivering frantic herd.

The sound of their frantic fellow being killed so close to the herd so terrified the cows that two of them, including little Omingmong's dam broke through the cordon of defending bulls, and fled into the semi-darkness. This spelled their doom also.

At first little Omingmong was frantic at the loss of his mother, and he ran bleating up and down, seeking shelter and comfort from the rest of the

cows. Finally an old cow who had no calf of her own adopted him and he had her care and watchfulness for the rest of the winter.

It was a great relief to the struggling musk-ox when the tardy Arctic spring at last arrived and the snow disappeared and the new feed was once more green in the sheltered spots. Life for little Omingmong went on this second summer very much as it had the first, only he had to look out for himself now, and then he had enjoyed the protection of his mother. But this second summer, for some unaccountable reason, his sire, the old leader, took a very friendly interest in little Omingmong. Often the older bulls are jealous of the calves and yearlings, but this was not the case of the motherless calf. Little Omingmong on his part was much pleased to have a guardian, and he trotted after his sire and watched his every movement, and so picked up much of his musk-ox wisdom. Thus it was that he learned many things that stood him in good stead when was a full-grown bull himself.

This summer the mosquitoes were even more troublesome than they had been the summer before, and the musk-ox often had to take to the water to escape them, or they would go down by the sea and the Arctic winds would blow away the troublesome black swarms.

Several calves had been borne in the spring, and little Omingmong amused himself by playing with some of them. Their mothers did not mind if he

did not get too rough. About the only game that they played was a butting one, pushing each other about. Even at this early age little Omingmong often indulged in sham battles with other yearlings, and when by autumn, his first suggestion of horns, in the form of two hard lumps on his forehead, appeared, he thought himself quite a warrior.

This second winter little Omingmong learned about their worst enemy, man. He had thought the white wolf terrible, but man he found was much more destructive to the musk-ox. It was not a white man who descended upon the herd of Omingmong, but one who really has a legitimate right to hunt them, the Eskimo. To the poor Eskimo who has almost as hard a struggle with the elements as does Omingmong, the musk-ox is a great source of help because he is not only meat, when the Eskimo needs meat badly, but Omingmong's beautiful hide with its thick hair, always covers the Eskimo's sleeping bench.

Sometimes a musk-ox will live his entire life without ever seeing a human being, but more often he is harassed and hunted by Eskimo parties from his calfhood days. The musk-ox is not wise when attacked by man. He should run and run until he gets beyond their reach, but instead he soon comes to bay when followed by the yelping packs of Eskimo dogs.

Thus it happened that when the herd in which little Omingmong lived, suddenly one day found

itself beset by a yelping pack of half-starved Eskimo dogs, they all lost their heads and fled madly and blindly without seeing where they were going. Thus it happened that Omingmong's sire, who was wise as musk-ox went, lead his herd precipitately into a pocket from which there was no escape. This pocket was formed by high cliffs on three sides, and in almost less time than it takes in the telling, the herd was wedged up against the cliffs at the further end of the pocket, with the yelping dogs holding it fast on the only side of escape. The Eskimo were following fast on foot and in a few minutes they too had joined the dogs, and their stolid faces fairly shone as they saw the desperate plight of the herd of Omingmong, and the wonderful luck that had come to their hunting party.

It was not sport with a fighting chance for the quarry, but just a heartless slaughter that nearly exterminated the herd of Omingmong, while the Eskimos danced about the kill in great glee. And they had a right to be glad and to be thankful for their good luck, for a hundred miles to the south the igloos were without meat, and their supply of musk-ox robes was low. So their glee was legitimate.

But fortunately for my story not all the herd had taken refuge in the fatal pocket, for one of the younger bulls had broken away with two cows, and little Omingmong had followed him. So while the

rest of the herd were falling before the bullets of the Eskimo, these four were fleeing through the semi-darkness as fast as their legs could carry them. They did not stop running for hours. Something told them that the only thing to do was to run and run until they could run no more. So the leadership of the sorrowful remnant of the great herd now fell to the young bull and to him and the two cows was shifted the burden of restoring the herd to its former numbers.

The small herd had a rather sorry time for the rest of the winter. They had fled far from their old feeding grounds, and feed in the new country was not as good as it had been in the old land. Besides the young bull lacked experience in picking out good country where they could feed. He also had not the wisdom of little Omingmong's sire in finding sheltered spots where they could rest and sleep.

They were followed for several days by a polar bear who tried to get in striking distance of them, but the young bull wisely kept them on the run until they finally left the white hunter behind. Occasionally a stray fox crossed their trail, but for the better part of the time they had it all their own way. Only the pale moon and the blinking stars kept them company, and they were very silent and rather ghostly.

Little Omingmong lost much of the flesh which had covered his bones in the autumn. So when

the tardy spring at last came he could hardly stand. When he could again nibble new saxifrage and green creeping willow and fresh lichens and moss, he was very glad. With the coming of spring the young bull led the little herd into their old stamping grounds, and all rejoiced. It was surprising how rapidly little Omingmong put on flesh and how soon his coat became bright and vigorous. This spring he developed quite a suggestion of horns. They had been growing all the time for the past six months, but they now became rather apparent, and he was very proud of them. So much so that he went after another two-year-old whom he saw feeding one day nearby, and gave battle. This was not a desperate fight such as he would wage later on. Neither was it the play in which he had indulged as a calf, but it was as hard a fight as the two-year olds could give each other. To his great satisfaction, little Omingmong worsted the other two-year-old and sent him scurrying away to other feeding grounds. This made the successful combatant so stuck up and so belligerent that the bull who led the little herd had to give him a good drubbing to teach him his place. Otherwise he might have wanted to run the universe.

The spring came rapidly for such a desolate country. The white Arctic geese winnowed their way through the blue sky. The auks were everywhere, while the musk-ox saw many shore birds whenever they ventured near the sea. They now

saw white wolves frequently, but small game was plentiful, and they did not hunt the musk-ox. True, a young wolf had attempted to pull down little Omingmong one day when he wandered far from the herd and a lively running fight had ensued. But the young musk-ox had finally beaten him off and escaped. This adventure also had added to his sense of importance, so the older bull had to again discipline him.

The third winter passed rather uneventfully. The new leader led his little herd wisely and well. He kept far away from that land where little Omingmong's sire had led them to doom. The herd had now been swelled by the last spring's calves, which trotted after the cows just as little Omingmong had done when he was a calf. He often butted the calves about and even chased the cows, when the bull was not watching. So it will be seen that little Omingmong was fast getting to be anything but little and a rather bullying important musk-ox.

But the most important thing that happened in the little herd as far as our animal hero was concerned, was the fact that early in the autumn they had found a solitary three-year old musk cow who had joined herself to their small herd. Little Omingmong at once began flirting with her after his kind, and it was soon settled that she was to be his mate, unless a more formidable bull should dispossess him. So all through that third winter

he had a companion who was more to him than was the rest of the herd.

In the fourth spring of his life there was a little lonely calf trotting after the mate of the proud young Omingmong. So since he now has a family of his own, a cow and a calf to look after, I shall no longer call him little Omingmong, but Omingmong, which is the Eskimo name for all musk-ox.

All that summer the new calf trotted at the flank of the cow and Omingmong led them where there was the best feed, just as he had been led when he was a calf. He also watched over them as his sire had watched over him. Omingmong now remembered all the things that he had seen his sire do. He remembered how he had shielded them from dangers, so he mounted guard himself in the same manner. But with the coming of winter a jealousy sprang up between Omingmong and the bull who had led the herd before the coming of Omingmong's mate. The older bull harassed Omingmong and chased him about so much that he finally took his cow and calf into another part of the barrens, and they lived by themselves. This was fortunate for him, for the old herd were soon discovered by an Eskimo hunting party and all but two young cows were killed.

These two desolate cows in time joined themselves to Omingmong's herd, and he became the leader of a real herd of which he was the master and the dominant spirit. The musk-ox if left alone

always goes in herds of from twenty to fifty head, but they were hunted so much by the Eskimo and the white wolves that straggling remnants of herds were often encountered. So it happened that when another young bull asked to be admitted to the herd, he was taken in, and Omingmong's herd was increased to six head.

Thus the desolate years went by until Omingmong was seven years old. He led his herd with all the wisdom of the musk-ox. He fought the battle for existence for them with all his strength and musk-ox cunning. But do what he would, his herd did not increase as it should have. For each winter the white wolf got some of them. The polar bear also took toll of the herd. In spite of all that he could do, the Eskimo hunters often found them and diminished their numbers. They could fight the cold, the scant food they did not mind, but these three other dangers often left them with decimated ranks.

But away to the South, in the land of sunshine there was a restless inquisitive race who had always dreamed of the day when they should plant a gay colored flag upon the exact spot where their instruments should tell them the north pole was located. The Eskimo had often helped them in their arduous expeditions. They called this imaginary pole the "great nail." They often, upon their hunting trips, pointed excitedly to the north and

cried "The Great Nail, some day white man find him."

Thus it happened that the restlessness and the curiosity of the indomitable white man, who wanted to know what was at the top of the world, played havoc with the little herd of musk-ox led by Omingmong. But this last great tragedy would not have befallen the herd, had not their leader taken them over the ice to northern Greenland. He was seeking a new home beyond the ken of the Eskimo, and thus he encountered a worse foe, the white man.

Commander Peary and his faithful Eskimo and dog team had been floundering laboriously over the snow fields in northern Greenland for three weeks. All had gone fairly well until two days before and then an appalling accident had occurred. The party had attempted to cross an intersecting bay which would cut off twenty miles of hard travel. It was early spring and the ice was rotten and one of the sledges had gone through a treacherous lead. This would not have been so bad, but this particular sledge carried nearly all the provisions. So it had gone to the bottom with four dogs and nearly a thousand pounds of the supplies which they had hauled so laboriously from the supply depot at North Harbor. The two Eskimos who had driven this sledge had at once set out on a return trip to the base for more supplies, while the intrepid white

man with the other two Eskimos and the remaining dog team had pushed on northward.

Commander Peary had been persuaded in this course by the assurance of the Eskimo that musk-ox were quite plentiful in northern Greenland, and that they would soon find meat. But now on the fourth day of their travelling with almost no food their plight was desperate.

As a last resort the men could, of course, eat the dogs. The Eskimo would not have minded this so very much, as an Eskimo has a good stomach, and can eat most anything, but the white man rebelled against the idea. True he was enured to hardship. He had seen and experienced frontier life in all its grilling forms. Yes, he would even eat the dogs if he had to, but he much preferred something else. But every few miles the Eskimo would declare with childlike assurance, "Oming-mong, he plenty here. We find him soon. Then much eat."

But as they journeyed painfully forward, the sledge moved slower and slower. They were obliged to stop even more and more frequently. The temper of the starving dogs became worse at each mile. The men themselves felt their last desperate strength which they had kept up by superhuman will power slowly waning. They could not hold out many hours more. In spite of all he could do Commander Peary, himself, occasionally felt a strange weakness coming over him, but he must not

succumb. He had struggled for years to discover the pole, and this was his very best chance. He must not give up. So he floundered manfully forward, cheering his companions with jokes and laughter and queer little fragments of song.

"If we not find Omingmong tonight we all starve," said one of the Eskimos despairingly, towards night of the fifth day.

"Omingmong, he very smart. He know we want to kill him. He run very fast. We all starve. I get sick inside pretty quick."

"We will find him soon, my man. Don't you get discouraged. Pretty quick we eat much musk-ox meat."

The words were hardly out of the commander's mouth when the lead dog set up a frantic yelping and began straining at his harness.

"Perhaps he go mad," cried one of the Eskimos in a frightened voice. "We all go mad."

"Omingmong! Omingmong!" cried the other slashing at the dog's harness with his knife.

Then the three men strained their eyes to the northward and saw on the brow of a distant hill what the dog had been first to scent, the welcome outlines of a fine musk-ox bull. It was our friend Omingmong and the rest of his little band who were on the further side of the hilltop feeding.

In less time that it takes to tell, the pack of famished blood-thirsty sledge dogs were in full cry after the musk-ox herd. Omingmong at once saw

the great danger. It was both men and dogs that threatened them, and that was sure death to them all if they did not flee with all their strength. So he sounded the alarm and himself led the way across a stretch of rather smooth country to the north. All would have been well with them for that time, had it not been for a dissension in his herd which had been growing for several days. Another bull had sought to wrest the leadership from Omingmong. They had fought several battles which had not been decisive. So at the time that Omingmong sounded the alarm and called for the herd to follow, the other bull attracted the attention of several cows and led them off in another direction. At last all the herd followed him and went to their doom. It was the old, old story. The inexperienced bull led them into a canyon which ended in a blind pocket. Soon the dogs had them coralled.

Several of the herd tried to climb the side of the canyon and thus escape. But the three men saw to it that they did not. They shot these escaping animals first and then turned their attention to the rest who had taken refuge at the further end.

Ordinarily the white man would not have countenanced slaying all, but here he saw a great mercy of providence. The killing of this herd meant that he could cache hundreds of pounds of fine meat several degrees nearer to the pole than he had ever dreamed of doing. It meant the success of the

expedition. So all the musk-ox with the exception of Omingmong were slaughtered. Just how much this had to do with the final discovery of the north pole civilization never learned.

The Eskimos, with cries like wild beasts, fell upon the snow by the dead musk-oxes, and with their knives ripped open the animals' throats and drank freely of the red life-giving blood. Seeing how soon the hot blood revived them, and feeling a dreadful faintness coming over him, the white man did the same.

So the expedition was saved. Science was to profit by the tragic event which had again robbed Omingmong of all his little herd. Omingmong himself heard the cries of the dogs and the shots from the rifles of the men, and he knew full well what had happened. So he fled hour after hour. He did not stop to feed or rest, but simply ran and ran. Then when he had regained his strength and wind he ran again. He kept up this policy for days.

Finally he came to the edge of the mainland where it touches the Arctic Sea at the most northern point of land in the world. He did not stop here, but continued his flight upon the ice. Finally after two days more of continuous flight, he reached an island, uncharted and unknown, even to the Eskimo. Here he stopped and rested. He finally discovered that this island was large enough to sustain him. It was far from the domain of man, and the white Arctic wolf never was seen

upon it. Here was feed enough in summer and he could sustain life in winter, so here he stayed.

The battle against the elements was hard. Feed was not plentiful as it had been in Greenland, or on the mainland but still he could live. But the one thing that most pleased him was that he had left all his natural enemies far behind, and the fight with nature he could endure.

There let us leave him. He may be lonely, but he can endure that. He may be hungry sometimes, but he will not starve. So there let him live out the rest of his days. The last of his herd. Omingmong of the frozen north.

CHAPTER IV

SILVERKING



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SILVERKING

Silverking was born late in February in a cave close to the sea. He was really white, but I have called him Silverking because he had a silver sheen in certain lights, and I like the name.

The particular cave which witnessed his birth was far from civilization in the frozen north, close to the Arctic Ocean. It was situated on the shore of Baffin's Bay. Some time in prehistoric ages the waters of the strait had probably scooped out the cave and prepared it for the bear family, but now the highest tides fell ten feet short of the entrance. It was reached by a series of stone steps which were very easy of ascent. It was quite a natural fortress and had to be defended only on one side. This, Silverking's sire and dam were quite competent to do.

They were polar bears, powerful and terrible in combat when fighting for their young or in self-defense; but as far as man was concerned, they rarely saw him. The only men they knew were the Eskimos, and the bears usually ran as far and as fast as they could when they scented them. The Eskimo of today is much better armed than for-

merly and he often possesses a fine high-powered rifle, so the white bear may well run from him.

Silverking's mother had gone into hibernation early in October. The female polar bear always hibernates when she is with young but the male prefers to prowls about. For four months Silverking's mother had slept peacefully, and then she had been aroused by the coming of Silverking and his sister. The regulation bear family is two. Rarely there is three; and if the mother is old, sometimes only one, but bear cubs are usually twins and very small for the size of the dam.

Their life for the first three months was very simple. They just ate and slept. Before they got their eyes open they did not know the difference between day and night, and even after that it was so dark in the cave there was not much difference. It was warmer in the cave than it was out of doors, and the two cubs nestled in the long thick coat of their mother and so kept very warm.

The reader may wonder how the old bear kept her flesh and nursed her two cubs, and my reply is that she didn't. When she denned up in October, she was as fat as a pig, with a hundred pounds of extra fat upon her ribs. So all through the winter she lived upon her fat; that is, the system gradually absorbed it and fed the functions of the body, which were rather sluggish. But this extra fat enabled her to feed the baby bears until the coming of spring.

When she finally staggered forth into the bright world where the Arctic sun had come again to the frozen land, Silverking and his sister were much larger than when born. They now weighed perhaps ten pounds each. But it was a great surprise to them to come forth into the sunshine, for they had thought the whole world was dark just like their cave. The strong light made them wince and blink, and they could not see well in it at first; but they soon got used to the light, although it did make their eyes sore for a day or two.

Also the outside world was much noisier than the cave had been. The booming of the breakers upon some adjacent cliffs at first filled the cubs with terror; but seeing their mother paid no attention to it, they soon forgot about it. Little animals are very imitative. They watch every motion of their mother and that is the way they keep out of danger.

The two cubs were much surprised one day when their sire, a mighty polar bear, came around and looked them over. He was so tall and large that he seemed almost like a mountain to the cubs. But seeing he intended them no harm, they did not mind when he sniffed at them.

The first experience of the cubs with water was rather amusing. When they stepped into this transparent fluid which was so cold, they whimpered and ran back. But the old bear coaxed and coaxed and finally got them to lap the water just

as she did. When they discovered that the water did them no harm, they ventured in after the old bear. It did not take them long to learn to swim. In fact they swam naturally the first time the old bear took them beyond their depth. Man is the only animal who has to learn to swim.

As the days became warmer, the old bear took the cubs far from their home cave, and little by little, they were taught all those things which it is necessary for a polar bear to know. The bear family had not been out in the open many days when the mother bear led the way to a sheltered valley where the warm May sunlight had broken the hold of the frost upon the sloping south bank. Here she was able to dig some of the plants and roots which she had long craved. The cubs thought them very bitter and unpleasant to eat, but the old bear rooted and ate until she was satisfied.

It was not long before the cubs, which are naturally playful, developed the rough and tumble game, which is their favorite sport. At first they contented themselves with rolling over and over, poking each other in the face with their clumsy paws, but finally they were able to stand erect upon their hind legs and wrestle like two boys.

One day the old bear found a shallow pool which had been made at high tide. Several large fish had been left in the hollow by the receding water, and she at once waded in and began striking the fish with her great paws. Soon they were flopping

about on the land in a lively manner. When the mother bear had captured all the fish in the pool, she went ashore and despatched them. Then she began eating them greedily. The cubs at first nosed them over suspiciously, but after a while they sucked away at some of the softer portions of the fish. Before the summer was over they had learned to eat them as the old bears did.

But with the coming of June things in this bleak country began to change rapidly. The twenty hours of sun per day did wonders. The geese, the ducks, the auks, the seal, and walrus were all going north. The seal and walrus were following the ice-flow, and the white bear always follows where the seals lead. This is not from love of the seal family, but because Bruin is very fond of seal pups, or even an adult seal when he cannot get pups.

So it happened that the mother polar bear one day put the two cubs on a large cake of ice, and they all started travelling northward. This was the way they wanted to go, and as long as the tides and the wind kept their cakes going northward they stayed with it. At last they landed at an island which was the seals' rookery, where the female seals gave birth to the pups.

These were born the latter part of May and the first of June. The old bear had to be careful in stealing seal pups and carrying them away, for the old bull seal was always on the watch and he would

put up a desperate fight if he caught the poacher. But there were tens of thousands of seals and as many pups. So it was easy for the white hunter to find a pup unguarded if she waited long enough and bided her time. This she was willing to do for she was hunting not only for herself but for her young.

The two white cubs did not think warm seal blood as good as their mother's milk at first, but they finally got used to it and were as greedy for it as they could well be. So the bear family passed a very pleasant summer on the seal island, living upon fish, seal pups, and plants which the old bear dug for them.

The cubs were rather inquisitive and often investigated things which they should have let alone. One such adventure befell them when they ventured too near to a sleeping sea lion. But the old bear found them just in time and hurried them out of danger.

Another adventure befell them later when the two cubs climbed to the top of a high cliff which overhung the sea. There on the very summit they foolishly indulged in a rough and tumble game, and both rolled over the edge of the cliff and fell thirty feet into the water. The fall knocked the breath out of them, and made them gasp for several seconds. But worse even than this, when they tried to find their way back they discovered that the cliff was so steep on the side towards the sea

that they could not climb it. They would climb up a few feet, then a big wave would wash them back into the sea. Their pitiful whimpers for help soon brought the old bear and she led them around to another spot where they could come ashore. Then instead of sympathizing with them, she gave each a good box on the head and told them in bear language to keep near to her in the future and let things which they did not fully understand alone.

Finally the short summer was over and the three bears turned their noses southward. They had missed some of the best fishing which had occurred during the summer, but they had enjoyed the warm months on the seal island.

The cubs by this time were quite sizable bears, weighing perhaps seventy-five or a hundred pounds. They could wrestle and box like two boys and thought they were great fighters as well. To their great astonishment, as soon as they were back in their old domain, the old bear left them to shift for themselves and slipped away to her cave to fall asleep again until she could give birth to more bear twins. The sire of the two cubs now took charge of them and they hunted and fed with him for another two months. Then they also crawled into a warm sheltered cave and slept.

The following spring the two bears came forth from hibernation and at once proceeded to the warm valley to dig for roots for themselves where their mother had led them the year before. After

a day or two they were joined by their dam and two new cubs. Yet to their surprise the old bear would have very little to do with them. But by this time they were about a third grown, and were well able to take care of themselves.

Late in May they followed the ice-flow once more to the seal island and for a month grew fat on seal pups. Then they journeyed back southward and also inland, where they found a fine stream where the fishing was very good. So all through the summer they fished after the style of bears, and ate roots, varying it with flesh diet when the hunting was good.

They managed together to stalk and kill a caribou calf. The mother was so terrified at the sight of the two bears that she ran away as fast as her legs could carry her, after a short fight. They saw a few musk-ox herds, but these were usually carefully guarded by a watchful bull.

In the lowlands they found many lakes and ducks were quite plentiful. Occasionally they were lucky enough to find a duck's nest in the moss and they at once despoiled it. Either duck's eggs or young ducklings were much to their liking.

Thus the seasons passed until they were two years old and that autumn Silverking's sister penned up, as she had mated late in the summer and was going to be the mother of two white bear cubs herself, the next spring. But Silverking preferred to roam about, matching his growing

strength against the bitter cold and the terrific winds.

He learned to swim in the open sea when it was twenty degrees below zero. He followed the ice-floes southward and hunted seals, and he went inland for caribou. Often he followed the caribou through the deep snow for days till he tired them out and killed them. He could travel on the soft snow better than they could because of his great cushioned feet. Once he robbed a trap and spoiled a fine fox which would have brought the Eskimo much money. The trapper was very angry when he saw the telltale tracks in the snow, and swore vengeance on the thief. So he followed Silverking for two days. Once he got so close that he wounded him badly in the flank.

Silverking did not know that it was the loud report that had caused the great pain in his flank, but he did associate it with the strange two-legged creature who was following him so relentlessly. After that whenever he smelled the scent of any of these creatures or saw their tracks in the snow, he ran as far and as fast as he could.

It seemed to the white bear that these two-legged creatures were very inquisitive, for he often saw their tracks in out-of-the-way places. They travelled far and fast with strange wolves drawing them. Twice Silverking saw the men creatures travelling in that way. They came far to the north into the musk-ox country. They went to the seal

island in strange flat things that swam upon the water like ducks.

On one never-to-be-forgotten occasion they pursued Silverking, and nearly got him with their tame wolves. He was out on the ice-flow hunting for seals when suddenly the tame wolves appeared all about him. They barked and snapped at him and ran at his heels. No matter how fast he ran, he could not get away from them.

At first there had been two of the man creatures with the tame wolves pursuing him, so Silverking ran as fast as he could and the two-legged creatures were soon left far behind. When he saw that he had only the tame wolves to contend with, the exasperated bear turned upon them. He struck right and left with his great paws. Soon he had killed one of the dogs and badly wounded another. So the yelping pack went scurrying back to the men while Silverking himself escaped.

Finally towards the middle of that winter, Silverking concluded that he had had enough of the cold and the wind; so he denned up and slept for a couple of months.

In the spring when he came forth, he was three years old and a mighty bear, although not fully grown. By midsummer the mating instinct had begun to assert itself, and he began looking about for a mate. It is probable that he did not just know what he was looking for, or what he wanted;

but Mother Nature would reveal it to him in due time.

In the summer upon one of the fine rivers in the southland where the fishing was good, Silverking found his mate. They spent a month or two in blissful courtship, and then late in September or early October he said good-bye to his mate, who went into hibernation while Silverking roamed the icefloe and the barrens close to the sea in search of food.

I do not believe that he ever visited his mate in her dark cave all through the winter. But he did look her up in the spring and inspected the two lively cubs.

Late in May Silverking took his little family to the northward to the seal island. He remembered all his own mishaps when a cub and so helped his mate to watch the small bears.

Silverking himself felt quite as though he owned the ice-flow when he piloted his family northward. They spent two delightful months on or near the seal island, dining on seal pups, and growing fat after the long winter. Then in midsummer they went southward for a month's fishing on an inland stream. This diet of fish they varied with many kinds of roots and plants and also some wild berries.

Late in September Silverking and his mate again parted company. She denned up for her long sleep that she might be in good condition when the next

cubs should come. The two abandoned cubs roamed about by themselves or with Silverking for a month or two, then they too denned up for the rest of the winter.

But such a sedative life as that did not suit the dominant spirit of Silverking. He might den up for a few weeks or days, but for the greater part of the winter he preferred to roam and hunt, and match his great strength against the wind and the cold, and hunt as only a good hunter can. So this winter he made a trip far to the southward into the land of the barren grounds in search of caribou. Here he followed the herds for days, occasionally capturing a calf or even a cow. Once he cornered a bull, the leader of the herd, in a defile from which there was no escape.

Silverking crowded the bull closer and closer to the ledges and then they had a terrific battle, with only the Arctic stars and the moon to behold them. Finally after getting two or three rather nasty antler thrusts, one of which gashed his shoulder, and a glancing blow upon the neck from the bull's hoof, Silverking bore the valiant bull to earth and killed him with two blows of his great paw.

But this battle took some of the zest of hunting out of the great white bear, so he again returned to his own country, and spent the rest of the winter hunting musk-ox and other game. Finally in the spring, he went in search of Mrs. Silverking. This time she presented him with two more lively cubs.

The two last year's cubs also put in an appearance, but Silverking concluded that he and his mate had done enough for them so he drove them away with a great show of bluster. They did not see them again until they visited the seal island. There they found the cubs had preceded them to that favorite summer resort for white bears.

Silverking did not look after his family as well that summer as he had the year before, but preferred to roam by himself at his own sweet will. It gave more chance for adventure and for hunting, not to be tied down by one's family. This spirit of adventure, this restlessness, and wanderlust grew steadily on Silverking as he became older.

That autumn he did not again look up his old mate, but mated with another white bear whom he found on one of the fishing expeditions, late in the summer. The following October he left his new mate to find her own winter quarters while he roamed about the country in search of food and adventure.

Thus the years went by. There was always the mating in the summer-time and the roaming about in the winter, the fishing and the annual visit to Seal Island. Then there were adventures of stalking walrus calves, the fights with bull seals, when those valiant warriors would give battle; the glorious swims in the blue Arctic when it shimmered and sparkled in the summer sunlight. And

all the time the battle with the cold, the winds, and the frost.

By the time he was six years old, Silverking had reached his full size and weight. In fact he had not grown any in measurements for the last two years, but he was heavier now than when he was four. His coat was long and white, with silver-gray tips to some of the hairs, and that is why I have called him Silverking. He stood fifty-two inches at the shoulders, and his full length from tip to tip was over eight feet. His weight was over six hundred pounds. His powerful paw, which could strike a blow that would kill almost any of his enemies, was armed with claws three inches in length. He was the best boxer in the animal kingdom, even if he was left handed. He could pick up a seal which weighed a hundred pounds, and carry it for miles.

So altogether, he was the monarch of the Arctic and the king of the ice-floe. He probably would have gone on fighting the battles of a polar bear until he at last met with some violent death had not civilization intervened. But the greedy arm of civilization was stretched out for him and he could not escape it.

It was a long and arduous trip that the little steamer Sea-gull took to the Arctic Ocean. She was commissioned by several cities in the United States and was in search of Arctic flora and fauna, especially the latter. Besides the crew of ten men,

the ship carried several men from the zoos of different cities, and they, in turn, picked up Eskimo and Indian guides and helpers. The white men might know about these denizens of the north in captivity, but the Eskimo could tell them many things about the animals of the region beyond the Arctic Circle.

After leaving the Grand Banks, the steamer had kept her nose pointed north or northwest, until she reached Baffin's Bay and Davis' Strait. Finally she turned to the west and came into Hudson Bay, where she intended to capture some of her wild cargo. The ship was well equipped to care for these denizens of the North, once they were captured. There were swimming tanks for the seals, stalls for the muskox, and large strong cages for the bears.

The ship arrived early in June, and spent the better part of the summer in this work of transporting as much of the fauna of the Arctic as possible to the temperate zone, that the men and women of the United States might behold the denizens of the frozen north alive and in all their pristine glory.

It was midsummer and the long Arctic days were trying to make up to the earth in this desolate region what they had denied her during the cold months.

Silverking and half a dozen other polar bears were luxuriating on a small island close to the mainland at the entrance to Hudson Bay. They

had been there for several days. The island abounded in roots and plants which were to their liking and there was good fishing in several coves and shallows close to the mainland. But one day the Sea-gull came puffing into the bay close to the island, and dropped anchor within sight of this bear's paradise. Almost the first living things that the men of the expedition spied through their glasses were the lazy fat bears, and they at once set to work to capture the largest of the happy company, which happened to be Silverking.

They let down the motor-boat, and a white man and two Eskimo's took their places in it, one to run the motor, and the other two to use the lariats, or ropes. They could do nothing with the bears as long as they were on the land. In fact they could hardly get within rifle range. But if they could get them into the water, they would be at their mercy. So another Eskimo landed on the island and drove Silverking into the water. The great polar bear did not mind this. In fact he felt even more safe in the water than on land; for was not he the very best swimmer among quadrupeds? So he struck out bravely for the mainland. He had no mind to stay and fight, for several wounds that he had received at the hands of Eskimos had taught him that the only thing to do when these strange two-legged creatures appeared, was to run as far and as fast as possible.

But poor Silverking had miscalculated. In fact

he had not even taken the motor-boat into consideration. He knew the seals, the walruses, and many of the large fishes, but he had never seen such a fish as this,—one that swam upon the top of the water, and puffed and chugged as it swam.

Silverking swam with all his might, but do what he would, this strange fish gained steadily upon him. When he saw the Eskimos on the back of the fish, his fears were redoubled. This certainly meant trouble for him.

At last the strange thing was so close to him that the Eskimos could reach him with their ropes. The first rope missed, and Silverking greeted the attempt with an angry snarl. The second missed likewise, and here Silverking made the great mistake of rearing his head in the water to snarl at his tormentors. If he had swum with just the tip of his nose showing he might have put up a better fight. But this one moment in which he reared his head above the surface of the water, was fatal. Like a flash the rope swung above him, and the noose fell fairly over his head. And before he could struggle from its grip, it had tightened on his neck, and the first step in his capture had been accomplished.

As the rope tightened, a great rage filled Silverking. Who was this who had dared to restrain him, he the King of the Frozen North? He would teach them. Was not he stronger than all other polar bears? So he struck the rope a savage blow with

his paw. To his great astonishment, that very thing caused the rope to grip his neck the tighter. He caught it in his mouth and bit at it savagely. But this did no good. Finally the rope gripped his neck so tightly that it shut off his wind. So in a great rage he swam straight at his tormentors. As he had expected, the strange thing fled before him, but it kept just out of reach of his great paw. If he could only get at it! If he could strike it a crushing blow, he would overturn it and kill the two Eskimos who were trying to drag him to death.

But he could not reach the motor-boat, swim as he would. However, he was doing just what his enemies wanted him to do. They were trying to tire him out and wear him down until he could not lift his great head, or strike a blow with his mighty paw. For fifteen minutes the great bear swam after the motor boat, until finally when he raised his head again in mighty rage, they flung another rope about his neck and drew it tight.

At this point a great fear seized Silverking. Until then he had felt sure that he could fight them off. But now something seemed to be slowly but surely choking the life out of him. Slowly they were breaking his courage, and wearing him down.

For another hour they pursued him and ran away when he pursued. At last he was so exhausted that he simply rested and refused to fight. Then they prodded him with spears, until he was mad with fury, and the fight was on again. For three

hours they kept up this terrible grilling process until finally the King of the Ice-flow could not even raise his head. He lay inert and gasping in the water. They towed his nearly lifeless body to the Sea-gull and lifted him aboard.

It was a sorry company of Arctic dwellers which the Sea-gull at last took back to the United States with her, but the prize of the expedition was Silverking.

My first, last, and only meeting with Silverking was at the Bronx Park, where his den or prison was on a side hill, and was divided into two parts, the swimming pool, which was perhaps ten by twenty feet, and his ledge, or resting place, of about the same dimensions.

As he plunged into the small pool which was only about twice his length, I thought of his native swimming place, the blue Arctic, and how he used to slide down the slippery glistening iceberg into the sparkling sea, and swim for miles among the floating cakes. Of how he used to battle with wind and wave, with tides and undertow, and joy in his great strength. But here he, the greatest swimmer among quadrupeds, was only able to take one good stroke before his nose came up bang against the concrete sides of his tank.

Then when he clambered upon his shelf of concrete, I thought of the mighty ledges along the Arctic Sea where he had disported himself. I thought of his wild gallops among the precipitate

boulders, and the declivities of the barrens where he used to range. Where instead of the stale air of his den, there was the bracing tingling air of the Arctic, fresh from its race across the frozen seas.

Yes, Silverking's world had shrunk pitifully, yet he was still king. There was a power, a dignity, and a grace about him that his prison could not kill.

And his great savage heart, and his indomitable spirit, what of them? Their fires were probably banked, just smouldering against the time when some chance, a fire, a careless keeper, or a broken door, might again cause them to leap into their old passionate fury. The king was caged, but he was not conquered. He merely waited as patiently as he could and bided his time.

It was with a deep sympathy in my heart, that I said good-bye to the king of the Arctic and went my way musing as to the wisdom of civilization in prisoning wild life for the pleasure and exploitation of man.

CHAPTER V

BLUE FOX



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Blue Fox had been born early in May in a natural burrow upon a hillside, half a mile back from the shore of Bering Sea.

He was one of a litter of five. A rather large family you may think, but not large for the blue fox.

The mother fox was very proud as she exhibited the five fine pups to their sire for the first time. The male blue fox is a good natured chap, and a good father. In that respect he is not like the silver gray male fox, who will often eat the pups if he finds them alone before they get their eyes open.

Blue Fox is much the cleverest of all the different species of foxes. I do not mean by that he is keener or sharper of wits, for he is not. But he is more easily tamed and more tractable when tamed.

On many of the islands in Bering Sea there are hundreds of blue foxes, which are partly tamed, being bred by man for their fur.

These foxes are cared for by the Alaskan Indians and Eskimos who work for the fur companies.

But little Blue Fox, the hero of our story, was a wild blue fox. He lived on the mainland and not

on any island. His parents came and went as free as the wind. They hunted and sustained life by their wits and were happy after their kind.

That they had dangers and hardships to overcome goes without saying. All wild animals do. In a world where the larger wars on the smaller in a stern battle for existence there is naturally much to contend with.

But I am sure that Blue Fox's sire never complained or thought his lot hard. His life was the way of foxes and he knew nothing else.

The coat of the little blind, helpless foxes was very soft and short. They were lighter colored than those of the old foxes, which is almost always the case of young creatures.

But even at this early age, the five foxes had the usual fox characteristics. Although their faces were rather fat, yet they showed the unmistakable sharp fox outline, the fox ears, and the large bushy tail.

For nine days they were totally blind, then their eyes came slowly open, and they could see the faint light in the burrow, a glimmer of which came in from the entrance.

During these first days after the birth of the little foxes, father fox came two or three times a day with food for his mate. Sometimes he brought clams, or other small crustaceans, or perhaps it was a seafowl which he had caught after hours of patient waiting.

Once it was a seal pup, almost as heavy as himself. It was a cumbersome burden that he had to sling over his shoulder in order to carry it.

But he did not sleep in the burrow now, as he wished to give more room and air for the kit foxes, so he removed to a burrow near by. Here he could be on guard.

So the little foxes slept, and nursed their dam and then slept again.

After they were three or four weeks old they would tumble about in the burrow and nose each other, and even suck away at each others tails.

Finally when they were two months old the mother fox took them outside into the great wide world.

When they saw for the first time that the narrow, stuffy burrow was not all there was of the universe they were much surprised. They winked and blinked at the bright light. Everything that they saw scared them and they would go scurrying into the burrow as fast as their rather wobbly legs could carry them at any unfamiliar sight or sound. For even at this tender age they had begun to evince the fox suspicion and caution.

But seeing that the old fox was not disturbed each time the wind sent a leaf scurrying by, or an unfamiliar sound reached her ears, they soon took heart.

They were much surprised to see what a great animal their father was when he at last appeared.

One day he brought them a half-dead eel to play with. It was one he had captured in the shallows along shore. This the kit foxes at first thought a rather dangerous play fellow, but they finally fell upon it like little furies, and worried it in true fox fashion.

This was the first of many things that the old fox brought them to play with. Sometimes it was a clam, but more often it was some small creature which the crafty old hunter had bagged.

So the little family of kit foxes lived upon the hillside, and grew. They played and fought, and hunted flying leaves, and finally bugs and insects which they found in the grasses.

It was a red letter day in the life of the little foxes when their sire finally took them all down to the seashore. They went very cautiously. The old fox reconnoitering to see that no danger lurked in ambush for them. There was not very much to fear at this time of the year, as their fur was not good. But it was well to always be on guard.

They all climbed upon a high cliff and looked far out to sea. This was the first time that the kit foxes had seen the ocean but it was not to be their last. For it was from the sea that much of their living came. Sea birds and sea fish were in the future, to form a large part of their diet.

They saw the gulls circling about overhead. Some of them even flew low and called to each other. They clearly did not like the looks of the

fox family. Auks were there also in abundance. Ducks likewise flapped by. Seals were sunning on the sand, or on the rocks along shore.

For out to sea on a mud flat a great dark form was plainly seen. It was Iwok, the walrus bull, digging clams. But he was not in their class and they did not see much of him. But the seals were important neighbors. For the blue fox snatches a seal pup whenever he can find it unguarded. If it is very small he can kill it and carry it away, but as a general thing he takes a smaller game.

After this first day at the shore, the fox family were often seen digging in the sand for clams and other crustaceans. Finally in midsummer they ranged far and near and only came back to the burrow to sleep. Sometimes they slept in some other burrow, or natural den in the rocks. The young foxes were now growing rapidly.

Extending three or four miles back from the fox den on the hillside was a series of bluffs covered with spruces. These bluffs were interspersed by dark ravines. Back of this strip of timber along the coast was the great tundras, which stretched inland for four hundred milss.

In this spruce cover were many ptarmigan while an occasional snow-shoe rabbit could be found in the ravines.

So in midsummer the old foxes took Blue Fox and his brothers and sisters into this pleasant wooded region to hunt.

They learned by example largely. It was great fun for the small foxes who are natural hunters to go creeping stealthily through the thick cover. First they learned to hunt wood mice, and small squirrels, but after their sire had discovered a half-grown flock of ptarmigan for them, and helped them kill them, they were all eagerness.

It was a wild, never-to-be-forgotten day when the family, with the two old foxes leading off ran down a snow-shoe rabbit. If the foolish rabbit had kept travelling in a straight line they probably could not have caught him at all, but he soon lost his head and turned this way and that, often doubling back. At these times the old foxes would cut across and the poor rabbit lost several hard-earned jumps. Finally they were all so close upon him that he dove into a thick cover, from which hiding place the old fox soon dragged him. He did not kill the rabbit with a single bite, breaking its neck as he would usually have done, but instead, he gave it to the young foxes to kill. The old hunter stood by to see that the rabbit did not get away while the young foxes worried it to death.

When the first snows came they would track the rabbit by sight, and that made it still more interesting.

After the coming of the snows they had to hunt more hours each day as game was not so plentiful. Many of the sea birds on which they had depended went south, while the clams and other crustaceans

were often covered with snow, or frozen into the ice.

The coming of winter also had added another anxiety to the life of the foxes. This was that it made their pelts prime, or ready for market. Their fine coats, with their splendid brushes were now the prize of anyone who had the skill to trap or shoot them.

Not many foxes were shot as there were few dogs in Alaska, and the country through which the foxes ranged was so extensive. The trappers were Indians, Eskimos, and white men, and all trapped for the fur companies which had their trading posts in the towns.

Thus it happened that Sitka Pete, a rather worthless Indian, who was too fond of the white man's fire water, came into the region where the blue fox family had been born, and where they lived and hunted. He had a small dog team of four dogs, and on the sledge he carried a month's supply of provisions and a hundred new gleaming steel traps. He also had a tent, and other camping equipment. His traps were of the very latest model, what is called a jump trap. It was provided also with an extra set of jaws.

So this trap would not only catch its victim higher up because of the jump feature, but it would also catch him in two sets of jaws. With the old model trap it often happened that if an animal had nerve enough it could gnaw off its own leg

after being caught and limp away to freedom on three legs. It would always be a cripple among its kind, but that was often deemed better than death beneath the club of the trapper.

Sitka Pete, was a very skitful trapper, although he was not much of a man. He reconnoitered carefully this new country where he had pitched his tent before setting any traps. He noted each little watercourse that ran down to the sea. He searched out all the natural dens in the rocks. All the time he was making his survey of the land he took great care not to disturb or frighten any of the denizens of the region.

He discovered the tracks of the blue fox family the second day after his arrival, and he grinned broadly.

"Heap plenty blue fox," he said in his patois. "Me ketch him pretty quick."

The third day he began setting the traps. As ill luck would have it, he had discovered the home burrow of the blue fox family, and set half a dozen traps in and about the burrow while the fox family was sleeping.

Blue Fox's sire discovered the man scent almost before he had started for the entrance of the burrow. He went very gingerly, himself stepping over all the fresh dirt, and so escaped. But his mate and three of the young foxes were taken that first morning. So it happened that two-thirds of

their number fell beneath Pete's club the first day of the real trapping.

The old fox never allowed either of the two remaining whelps to enter that den again, but Pete was not yet done with the blue fox family. He set his traps cleverly in many places. Some of them he baited, while others he set in likely runways.

Blue Fox's brother fell victim to a tempting bait. Whoever supposed that a dead bird ever caught anyone by the paw and held him so that he could not get away?

Blue Fox's sire was wise. He had seen much of men and knew traps, but even a veteran fox who is very careful will occasionally stumble into a trap and this was what happened to the old fox a month after Blue Fox's only remaining brother had been caught. It was not his fault, the trap was not baited. He just happened to step into it. So this sad mishap left Blue Fox alone of all his family. Of course he did not know what it was that had happened to his family. He had seen them thrashing in the traps. He knew that something dreadful had happened to them.

Although he shunned everything that even faintly suggested the man, yet Blue Fox also fell a victim to the cunning trapper about the first of the year. By this time he had grown to be a splendid specimen of the blue fox species. He had always been much the largest and finest of the litter. In addition to that he had a wonderful coat, with a

splendid heavy brush. This was what saved his life at the time, and greatly changed his future existence.

The moment Sitka Pete saw him in the trap he began to dance about and shout, although usually he was a very silent man.

"Yah! Fine fox! Big I ever see. I not kill. I take to Fox Island. They give me fifty dollars. I only get twenty-five for skin."

So it happened that Blue Fox was not knocked on the head with the trapper's club. Instead Sitka Pete went to the camp and got a large camp blanket. This he threw over Blue Fox and for several minutes there was a very lively scuffle. Finally the frantic fox was pinned safely beneath the blanket, where he could not bite and with Pete's knees on either side holding him fast. The Indian then slit a hole in the blanket and let the infuriated fox stick out his head. Then he quickly slipped a dog's collar over his captive's head, and in a few minutes he had him safe on collar and chain as any dog would have been. But he did get a nasty bite in his wrist during the struggle.

For another week Pete plied his cruel trade, and then he broke camp and started for the town.

Blue Fox himself by this time was not so desperately afraid of the man and the dogs as he had been at first, so he trotted along behind the sledge like a dog.

Finally after Pete had sold his skins he made his

way to Fox Island. This is a narrow island of several hundred acres, close to St. Paul's. It is the most successful of all the fox farming islands in the Bering Sea, of which there are many.

The proprietors of the island are always on the lookout for fine specimens of the Blue Fox in order that they may improve their stock.

As Sitka Pete had forseen, they were much pleased at the sight of Blue Fox, and readily paid the Indian his price of fifty dollars. Thus it happened that Blue Fox began his life as a semi-domesticated Reynard on Fox Island.

He was one of about two thousand foxes, which ranged as they pleased over the island. They were not fenced in as is the case of fox farms in the United States and Canada, but ran as free as the wind. But because the island was several miles from the mainland they could not leave it.

Several men, most of them Indians, lived on the island with them, feeding the foxes and breeding them. They also attended to capturing them when the skins were prime and selecting some for breeding purposes, while others were divested of their fur coats for the greedy fur company.

Blue Fox's life upon the island was different from anything that he had ever experienced before. This island was quite heavily wooded in places with small spruces making ideal cover for the foxes. It was broken with low hills and ravines, and this also made it seem homelike to these semi-

domesticated foxes. It was also located so that the sea constantly gave it treasures in the way of food, clams and other crustaceans being found in abundance on the shores. While for the better part of the year sea birds swarmed on the island, so there were plenty of young birds and eggs to be had in the spring, and adult birds for many months of the year. This so helped on the feeding of the foxes that they were only fed during three or four months in midwinter; then they were given a ration which was much to their liking. It was half a pound of boiled fish and corn meal. A good feed for either dog or fox. So as compared with the life that Blue Fox had led upon the mainland this island was a sort of fox heaven.

Blue Fox could not imagine where all the other foxes came from. They were everywhere. He met them at every turn. Young foxes and old foxes, and all were rather friendly and not very much afraid of the men who came and went among them each day.

Blue Fox himself knew that these men creatures were very dangerous, and he tried to convey the idea to these stupid foxes in fox language, but they only laughed at him, or smiled. He showed them his badly sprained paw which had been hurt in the trap, but still they were not convinced.

Then there were the wire cage traps which were set everywhere on the island. These Blue Fox could not understand, but he knew that they were

very dangerous because they smelled so strongly of man. He often saw the foolish foxes in these traps, and he feared for their fate.

Each morning the men creatures came forth and examined all the cage traps. Those which held foxes they carried away on their shoulders. Sometimes the foxes on the island saw those foxes again, but often that was the last they saw of them. The truth was that these cage traps were designed for catching the foxes for two purposes. First, that the best males and all the females except the old ones, might be turned back on the island to breed, and secondly that many of the males so caught might be killed and skinned, which was the ultimate object of Fox Island.

So when a fox did not come back after being carried away in the cage trap it meant that his pelt was drying in one of the long low buildings where the men folks lived. This one fact of the cage traps and the foxes who did not come back worried Blue Fox continually, for he was not like the rest of the foxes on the island. He had been bred in an atmosphere of suspicion of man. All of his family had been sacrificed to the fur company, and he had reason to be suspicious.

So he kept far away from the traps, yet he ever watched curiously as the men carried the traps away each morning.

But the fate of the foxes who never came back, and the mystery of the long, low buildings drew

Blue Fox strangely. So he fell to skulking about these buildings whenever he thought the men creatures were not there. This at last led to his making a fearful discovery.

He was lurking in some bushes in front of the shed on the open side of the building one day when he discovered three men in the shed doing something. He did not at first discover what it was but he finally was enlightened.

There were half a dozen of the wire cages in the shed and three of them contained foxes. Presently one of the men went to one of the cages. In his hand he held a club. Slowly he lifted the door of the wire cage, until the fox within could push out his head to snatch a piece of fish which had first been placed on the floor. Then like a flash the club descended and stretched the fox out dead. Just at that moment the astonished Blue Fox happened to look in another part of the shed and he saw two men in the very act of slipping a fox's skin from his back, pulling it off over his head.

Blue Fox waited to see no more, but ran as fast as his legs could carry him to the very further end of the island. After that he was as wild as a hawk and would run like a streak whenever he saw any of the men creatures coming, and was ever on the watch to find some way to get away from the island and back to the mainland.

But at first there seemed no escape. The island

was surrounded with water, for the tides and waves kept the water open around Fox Island even in the winter. But in the springtime when great masses of ice came floating down from the north, a way of escape offered, and although it was a wild venture, yet Blue Fox took it and sailed away to his further fate.

He had been waiting out on the very tip of a promontory which projected well out into the current. Presently a large cake perhaps twenty feet square jammed near the shore. There were several smaller cakes between it and the shore making an ice bridge. So without waiting to weigh the consequences Blue Fox sprang lightly from point to point until he was upon the large cake. At that moment the jam gave way, and he started upon a sail down Bering Sea towards the great Pacific Ocean, the cake being taken by a swift current which flowed between the island and the mainland.

Here also it encountered a strong tide, and the waves ran several feet high, so each wave swept over the cake drenching poor Blue Fox every few seconds.

This sail to freedom was not going to be so fine after all. Perhaps he would have done better to have stayed on the island and taken a chance on losing his skin.

Blue Fox cowered on his cake of ice, digging his claws into it the best he could, and trying not to be washed off by each succeeding wave. To add

to his discomfort, a strong wind began to blow and it was very cold. But Blue Fox did not mind the cold, if only the waves would stop trying to wash him away.

There upon his uncertain ice ship Blue Fox crouched for hours, fearful and trembling.

Finally towards night the ice-boat again jammed in a large icepack at another point, which projected far into Bering Sea. The ice as far as Blue Fox could see was closely packed. The wind and the waves had subsided. Half a mile beyond the ice field there was a low lying coast, with hills beyond and they were fringed with spruces, just like Blue Fox's home country.

The poor fugitive wasted no time in jumping from his cake to another next to it, and so on from cake to cake. Sometimes he had to make a long spring. Often the cakes were very small and bobbed about like a cork when he sprang upon them. Once he had to retrace his way and find a place where the ice was closer together. But Blue Fox persisted, and his patience was finally rewarded. For with a great bound he sprang from the last cake upon the solid ice which fringed the shore, and soon he set his paws once more upon mother earth. He did not wait to look about him, but headed straight for the distant spruces.

They would hide him from his worst enemy, man.

But he did not rest for long even in the woods,

for presently the thought came to him that it was in the spruces that Sitka Pete had found him. He would come and trap him again. So he got wearily to his feet and pointed his nose eastward. He would flee beyond the knowledge of man. Presently as he slunk through the gray gloom he noted a footprint in the snow. It was not an animal's track but that of his worst enemy, man. He smelled it carefully to make sure, then fled on, this new discovery giving wings to his feet.

Blue Fox ran wearily for ten miles and then came out on the great lonely tundra, beyond the wooded region. The tundra which stretches away for four hundred miles from the Alaska coast with no signs of life upon it. It was treeless, and lonely beyond words to describe but for some reason, it just fitted into Blue Fox's mood. He wanted to be alone. He wanted to get away from man. Away from that restless, strange creature who went everywhere and destroyed everything he found. This creature who stripped the poor fox's warm coat from his back and left him to shiver in the cold. Once again the horror of that scene in the long, low shed gripped Blue Fox, and it gave the wings of the wind to his feet. For hours he galloped wildly over the lonely tundra, with only countless stars in the heavens, and the dancing aurora to keep him company. Sometimes he would stop and trot for a spell and then he would break

into his wild gallop again. The trot was not fast enough.

Finally the sun appeared and the bright spring day dawned. Then Blue Fox knew that he was very hungry, but there was nothing to eat here upon the tundra. So he again resumed his wild gallop. All day long he galloped or trotted, always keeping his nose pointed eastward. He had no map or compass. He did not know the direction of the sun, he had only instinct to guide him, yet he was certain that his tail was always pointed towards the man country along the Alaskan coast. There must be a refuge to the east. In the way his nose was pointed, if he ran far and fast enough, he would reach it.

On the third day, when he was nearly ready to drop from hunger, Blue Fox discovered the bones of a caribou which the white wolves had killed. The wolves thought they had picked the bones clean, but Blue Fox managed to find some morsels which they had missed. He spent half a day gnawing at the dry bones, and then sped on. On the fifth day he found another caribou skeleton and that gave him another meal.

On the seventh day, near dusk, Blue Fox saw some low hills in the distance. His heart gave a wild leap of savage joy when he discovered that they were wooded. As he drew near to the thick cover he saw with a great sense of homecoming that the trees looked familiar—they were spruces.

He increased his pace, and a minute later, the friendly forest opened and took him to its deep seclusion; it opened its friendly arms to receive the animal which had fled so far and so fast from the domain of man.

As Blue Fox penetrated deeper and deeper into the great woods he saw fox tracks, and snowshoe rabbit tracks and also ptarmigan signs.

Yes, it was a goodly country into which his wise head had guided him. He came upon a fresh rabbit track, and with the savage joy of the natural hunter he followed it rapidly, yet stealthily. He followed it for an hour, and then there was a wild rush, a cry like the cry of a baby, wild and pathetic, and a few seconds later Blue Fox was eating his first kill in the great woods. He had sought his meat from God and had found it.

When he had eaten the last particle of the rabbit he stretched himself and looked about for a place to sleep. Just as he crawled into a natural burrow under a fallen log he noted a fresh fox track near by. It smelled good to him. It was not too late to mate. When he had slept he would search for a mate, and together he and some fluffy Blue Fox would rear a litter of fox kits.

Yes, it was a goodly country into which he had come and he would live the fox life to the full. There in the very heart of the wilderness, a hundred miles from the abode of man, with the friendly forest above him, and the thick cover to hide him,

let us leave Blue Fox. He is a denizen of the wild and can take care of himself, for Mother Nature has made him wise after his kind.

CHAPTER VI

WHITE WOLF



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White Wolf first saw the light of day in a natural cave in the rocks on a hillside overlooking the McKenzie River. Yet, this light which he saw was not the full light of day, but just a glimmer that filtered in at the mouth of the cave, and slightly illuminated the den where the wolf whelps lay. He was one of a litter of five. This is not a large wolf family for they often have six or eight.

White wolf and his brothers and sisters were blind for about nine days, just as puppies are, and then their eyes came slowly open. But they did little save nurse and sleep for two or three weeks. Finally when they were three weeks old they began tumbling out of the nest and crawling about the cave on unsteady legs. It was a never to be forgotten day for them when they finally waddled to the mouth of the cave and looked outside into the bright and beautiful world. Before that they had thought the boundaries of the universe were the confines of the cave, but now a new world opened up to them and wonders awaited them outside in the bright sunshine of a June morning. So when their mother led the way they came trooping forth after her, full of young life, and eager for whatever

the world might offer. But they were rather shy at first and went scurrying back into the cave when their sire suddenly appeared on the hillside above them. They had both seen and smelled him often, but now he looked different, seen in the full daylight. But when they again appeared outside and found that he had brought them a young snowshoe rabbit which was not quite dead to kill, they at once fell upon the helpless rabbit and worried it to death. Then they looked about for more worlds to conquer. Their sire had hoped that they would eat the rabbit, but they did not as they were still too small. But in another month they were willing to gnaw away with their puppy teeth at almost anything he brought them. Although the home of the white wolf is north of the Arctic Circle, yet June brought all sorts of wonders to this northern latitude. Birds sang in the thickets, and ducks and geese swam upon the great river. The beaver wandered by the small streams and mink and muskrat played in the shallows. There was now good hunting, and the two old wolves saw to it that the pups had all the fresh meat that they could hold. So they grew rapidly and grew also wise in a knowledge of the wilderness where they lived. First they mastered the art of hunting bugs and creeping things in the grass, and from that they went by easy steps to moles and mice. Then it was but one more step to squirrels and ground birds. Young rabbits next formed their

prey, until when the autumn came, they were as eager for the rabbit chase, if not as skilful, as their sire and dam. They were by that time over half grown, and they already had evinced many of the wolf characteristics. They stood erect and alert. Their ears were always tuned to catch the slightest sound, and their nostrils were always sifting the wind for new scents, especially the scent of quarry.

The wolf is perhaps the most natural hunter in the wilderness with the exception of the fox. He hunts both alone and in the pack, but his worst ravages are made in force. This is when the pack sweeps over the glistening snows like the wind, uttering the sharp quick hunting yelp. Not only does the wolf in his strong packs hunt the largest game that moves, but he also hunts man when the other hunting is very bad.

So although the white wolf and his family were far from civilization, they were outlaws just the same, and man was ever ready to shoot them at sight.

In the early autumn, before the first snows came, the old wolves took the wolf whelps on a long journey to the southeast, to the home of the barren grounds caribou. They went in company with another litter of young wolves, and their sire and dam, so the wolf party numbered fourteen. Ten young wolves and four old ones.

Mr. Ernest Thompson Seton, who made an interesting trip to these northern prairies in 1907,

estimates this herd of caribou at ten million head. No more majestic and wonderful sight ever greeted the eyes of man than that of these mighty fearless battalions of the caribou when they suddenly take it into their heads to migrate. These migrations do not seem to have any particular object.

Imagine a herd of a hundred thousand head, with horns cracking against horns, with noses out-thrust and steam pouring from the widely extended nostrils, with hoofs clacking like castinets, rushing with an irresistible force across the vast treeless prairies. Picture this vast resistless mass, miles in extent, enveloped in a cloud of steam, with powdered snow filling the air above them. Imagine this multitude sweeping on their way while the solid earth rocks and trembles beneath pounding hoofs. Such is the caribou migration.

When the caribou is in this frame of mind the white wolf packs have no use for him. But it is when the caribou are in a more restful mood, feeding in small herds, or straggling about in lonely places that the white wolf seeks them out. Even then he only preys upon the calves or sick or old members of the herd.

Mr. Seton saw many caribou with broken legs while on this trip. He believes that the white wolves run them over precipitate cliffs, and then when they are disabled pull them down. So White Wolf, as I shall call our particular cub, had a fine time with his brothers and sisters and the other

young wolves, feeding upon caribou calves for a month in the Arctic prairies. But when the first snows came they headed back for their own country in the mountains adjacent to the valley of the McKenzie. Here they had their first experiences in running down the snow-shoe rabbit. It was a wild exciting sport. Hunting this quarry called for the greatest fleetness and a little patience. The wolf family would spread out in a fan shape and drive the thickets, with one of the old wolves at each end of the line. They went carefully as they did not want to disturb the rabbit until they were close upon him. If they did he would start and run so far and so fast that they could not overtake him. Their plan was to jump him and then to rush him, until he lost his head. Presently instead of running straight away he would double and twist, and each time he did this the pack would cut across and so gain on him. He might even get so rattled that he would dive under a tangle of underbrush and try to hide in the deep snow from which hiding place he was quickly routed out and killed. If he did not take to cover in this foolish way he was soon surrounded and killed in a desperate rush of all the pack, and in ten seconds there was little left to tell that a snow-shoe rabbit had paid the price of his life.

After being perfected in rabbit hunting, the young wolves were taught to search in the snow for ptarmigan, crows and other birds which had taken

refuge under the snow during a cold night and been frozen in. This occurs more frequently in the country further south, but it does occur sometimes in the north.

On rare occasions the wolf pack were enabled to jump an Arctic fox, and run him down in the same manner as they did the rabbit, but this was always a long stern chase, for the fox did not lose his head as did the foolish rabbit. So they had to follow him mile after mile across country, and often he escaped. Sometimes also they were enabled to tree a wildcat and keep him there until he froze, or his paws became so numb with the cold that he would fall into the snow beneath the tree and be torn to bits by the ravenous white pack.

Thus it will be seen that the white pack took toll from animals large and small, and of all the birds they could reach in the spring and summer. Not only that but they sometimes got so desperate that they hunted that fearful and wonderful creature, man. This mysterious two-legged animal who had such power over the wild creatures. The animal who set traps and laid poison for them and who also could speak to them in a voice of thunder, and cause them to drop dead in the snow, even when he was afar off.

So it will be seen that it was a wild and varied life that White Wolf and his brothers and sisters led in the wolf pack.

In the second spring when White Wolf was a

year old, the mother wolf came forth from the old den with a new litter. She had given birth to but one litter the year before, so these new whelps were quite a curiosity to the last year's wolves.

That same spring, the sire of the wolf den made a long journey to the west. He went over the long succession of ridges, most of them timbered, until he came on the outskirts of the mining settlements along the upper Yukon. Here he fell in with some huskies which belonged to a village of Alaska Indians. The wolves and the huskies in Alaska often meet on the boundary line of civilization. The huskies sometimes desert and go back to the wolf pack from which they sprang. But as ill luck would have it White Wolf's sire met with a husky who was suffering from that most dread of all dog diseases the rabies, and was bitten. So it happened that a couple of weeks after his disappearance from the McKenzie country, he reappeared in a very uncertain state of mind. He was very morose and would have nothing to do with his kin. Finally when one of the last year's whelps made too many advances to him he bit the cub and sent it yelping through the bushes. A few hours later he attacked his mate and killed her. He then turned upon as many of his offspring as he could find. By the time he had bitten three of his own family, White Wolf concluded that something very terrible was afoot. It was borne in on him that his sire was more dangerous than any of his

many enemies in the wilderness, so he stuck his tail between his legs and fled. The only far country of which he knew was the caribou country to the southeast so he fled to the great Arctic prairies. That wide trackless wilderness where he had spent the previous summer. Then he had been in company with all his family, and he now went alone. But to be alone was no hardship to White Wolf, for he was a denizen of the wild. It was warm and comfortable and the earth was beautiful and the hunting was good, so White Wolf was well content. The thickets in the gulches abounded with birds. Many of these nested on the ground and were good eating. The countless lakes which dotted the lowlands of the prairies swarmed with water-fowl, and these nested in the reeds along-shore, or even in the open. So White Wolf had no trouble in picking up a good living. He lingered in the land of the caribou until early autumn, then wended his way leisurely back to the McKenzie country. Here he went about those things which he and his brothers and sisters had learned of the old wolves the year before, foremost of which was hunting for snow-shoe rabbits. He saw only one of his litter brothers, the rest of the litter having perished of the rabies. Thus it will be seen that his wolf family of eight had dwindled to two.

White Wolf and his brother hunted in company that winter. It was much better to hunt that way.

If one hunted alone the quarry was always slipping out on the further side of the thicket and escaping. If two hunted together they could play into each other's hands. In the middle of the winter the hunting became very bad and White Wolf and his brother journeyed towards the Yukon country. Here they encountered a trapper and before White Wolf and his brother had learned the fear of fire-arms, the latter had been shot and White Wolf himself, was badly wounded. But he was lucky to limp away on three legs with this helpful lesson thoroughly learned.

The third spring, when White Wolf was two years old, he mated. So White Wolf himself now had a litter and a wolf den to guard, and a mate to hunt for. This he did with a will, for he was very proud of the blind, whimpering wolf cubs. So he hunted and watched that no danger came to his little family. Finally he saw the cubs come forth into the wide wonderful world. He initiated them into all the different phases of hunting just as he had been instructed. He took his family in the late summer on the long journey into caribou land and brought them back in the late autumn to teach them snow-shoe rabbit hunting. Thus the years passed until White Wolf was six years old.

He mated each year in February and each spring there was a litter of wolf cubs. Each summer he saw the cubs grow, and each autumn they were taught those things that it was necessary for a wolf

cub to know. He did not always have the same mate or the same den, yet there was always some mate and a litter of young wolves.

But all through the years White Wolf himself, had grown in stature and cunning, until he was the largest wolf on the McKenzie, or in Alaska, and the best hunter. He was also the wisest, and the best leader. So it happened that in his sixth year he had become the leader of the largest white wolf pack in that wild region. He had perfected his pack in all knowledge necessary to their welfare, with the possible exception that he had not been able to instill into them a proper fear of man and firearms. This was because they only met this danger in rare cases as their range was in such a desolate forsaken region. Thus it happened that when the pack of White Wolf took the trail of two prospectors who were trekking back to civilization, White Wolf was unable to keep them at proper trailing distance. So nearly half of the great pack fell before the bullets of the two men, Sam Laughton and Larry O'Brien. It was more excusable on the part of the wolves, as they were famished. It was the lean year among the snowshoe rabbits, and hunting had never been so bad in the memory of White Wolf. So it was no wonder that he could not restrain them from venturing in close in hopes of picking up one of the dogs of the dog team which drew the men's sled.

There is always a double danger to a dog team

from the wolves. A positive and a negative one. The positive danger is that of a real onslaught, while the negative danger is that the wolves will toll away the dogs, who are little better than wolves themselves. So while the dogs trembled in their traces as they saw the white figures skulking after them, or crowded close to each other at night when the white circle drew in close to the camp-fire, yet they were also fascinated and drawn by the call of their white brothers. Thus it happened that two of the dogs fell victims to this strange lure on the third night. They slipped into the gloom while the men slept, and were never seen again. The pack had fallen upon them like furies as soon as they had gone beyond the protecting flames of the camp-fire. So the following day, Big Sam had taken the place in the harness at the head of his little dog team. He had floundered manfully on all that day, while Larry, who was ill, blazed away at the white horde.

"You be careful," Sam had admonished his pal several times that day. "Our cartridges are getting low. God only knows what will happen if we should get out of ammunition!" But Larry did not heed him, and that evening, just before they made camp, he fired his last cartridge, and then told his partner what he had done. Sam groaned at the news, but said nothing.

In the early morning hours, when the life fires

are at their lowest, Larry died with his head upon Big Sam's lap.

After he had eaten a frozen piece of bacon Sam fashioned a long rope from the two remaining dog harnesses which he had kept after the dogs had disappeared and swung his dead pal into a small spruce where the wolves could not get him. In the spring he would come back and bury him.

That day he made more miles but at twilight he was amazed to see how close the white wolves had ventured. They seemed to know that his ammunition was gone, and that he was powerless. At twilight he made his campfire in a half circle with a high cliff at his back, and that evening Sam was able to collect very little firewood, and what he did secure was green. He lighted his last match in kindling it, and through the feverish hours he nursed the fire as he would have the last spark of life in his body, for it was all that stood between him and a terrible death at the white fangs of the famished pack. In spite of all his frantic efforts, however, the fire smouldered and went out at about two o'clock. Sam picked up some feeble embers and threw them into the pack and thus kept them off for another half hour, but finally even that source of resistance failed him. When the famished furies began springing at him, he saw that the last desperate fight had come. He armed himself with the light axe that he always carried, and with his great back against the cliffs he waited. The whin-

ing dogs cowered between his legs, and clung to him as their last hope of salvation. Some men would have thrown them to the wolves, but not so Sam. His dogs were his brothers. They had served him faithfully, and they would die together.

Sam was a rough man. He had thought little of God and things beyond this life. Yet he had a heart of gold. He would lay down his life for his friends any time, or even for his dogs. So as the white horde crowded close in upon him, and he saw that he could keep them off but a few minutes, his mind turned to that power which is mighty to save in a crisis like this.

"God," Sam prayed, "I hain't ever done nothin' bad to no one. Don't let these pesky wolves git me. Reach out your great arm, O God, and scatter um, like chaff. Help me God, because I can't help myself much longer."

Sam had barely finished his petition for help when it appeared very unexpectedly. There was the sound of heavy hoofs near at hand, and the whistle of labored breathing through widely distended nostrils. And before the astonished eyes of the man there appeared a mighty bull moose, thundering by within thirty feet of him. He was running heavily and closely followed by another white pack who were springing at his heels. As though by magic the snapping, leaping pack which had been trying to pull Sam and his trembling dog team down, raced after the new quarry. They went

out of sight in a whirl of snow, and a rushing circle of leaping, snapping wolves, with the mighty bull towering large in their midst. But he ran painfully, and the white pack were all about him. A hundred rods from the spot where Sam and his dog team cowered against the cliff, the monarch of the forest came abruptly to the edge of another cliff. He had been running along a wide shelf upon the side of the mountain. The pack was now hedging him in on every side. They were constantly snapping at his gambol joints seeking to hamstring him. He knew full well his danger. Thus it was, fighting for his life, beleaguered on every side, that the monarch saw the cliff suddenly yawn before him. He did not hesitate, but with a mighty spring went hurtling over the abyss. He made a wonderful picture as he sprang. His mighty form against the Arctic Sky, his great spreading antlers showing to their full. Down he plunged for fifty feet, landing in a snowdrift twenty feet deep, where he was nearly buried from sight. If the fates had sought to entrap him they could not have done better. He was so deeply buried in the drift that he could not fight. All he could do was to thrash his great head about and bellow. White Wolf, peering over the cliff, saw the bull's plight, and with a yelp of delight, led his pack around the cliff to the attack. In the open it would have cost the pack a half dozen of its members to have killed him, but now the feat was easy. So while the pitiless stars and

the pale moon looked down, while the winds moaned wildly in the treetops, and the snow sifted and drifted, they worried the monarch to death.

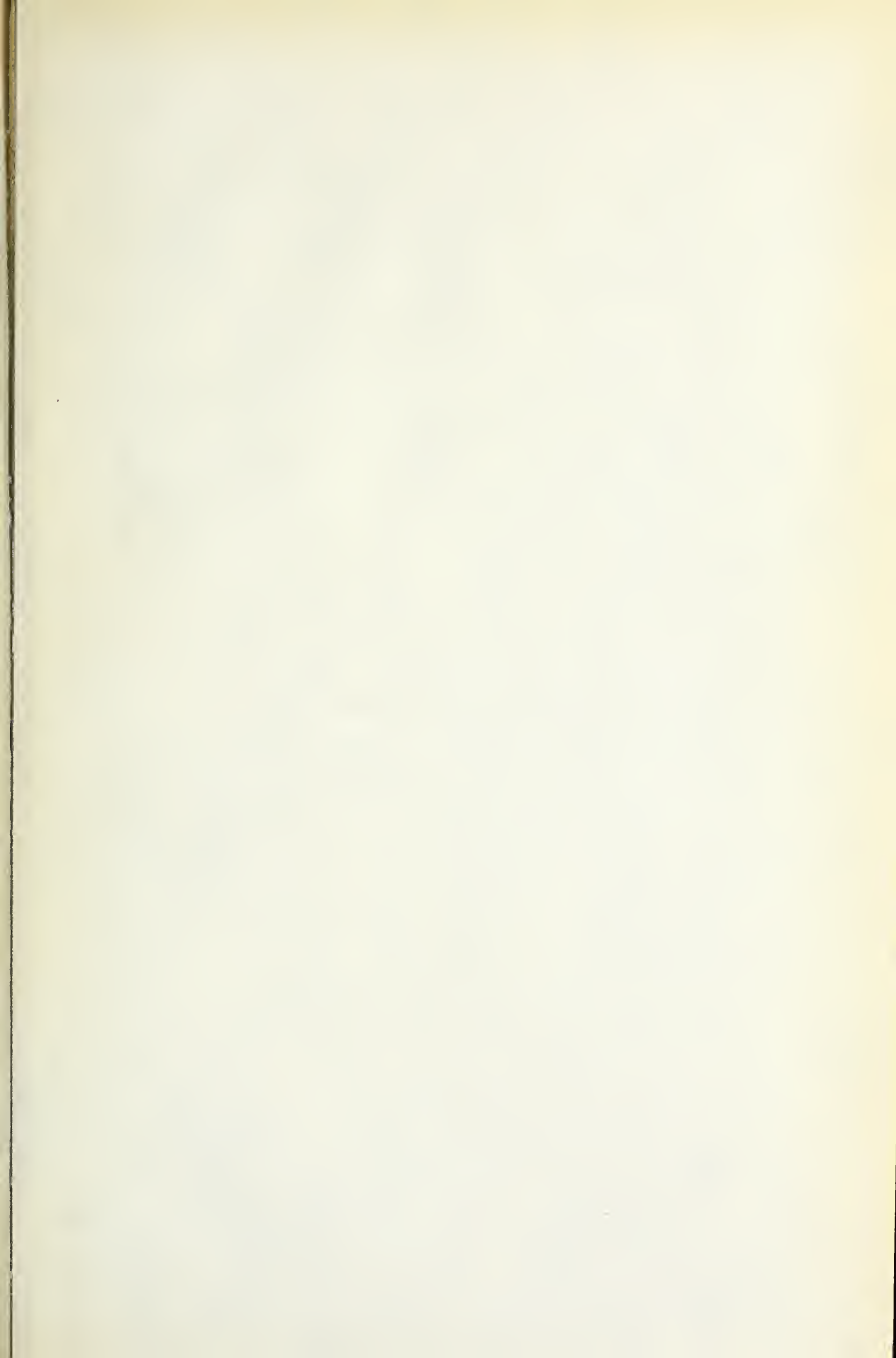
But it is a bad wind that blows no gain, so while White Wolf and his pack lingered by the kill, Sam and his beleaguered dog team made their escape. When the white pack again took up their trail Sam had put fifty good English miles between himself and his would be destroyers. So White Wolf and his band took another trail.

If you ever visit Chicago, go to the museum and ask to see the great antlers of the Alaskan bull moose. A prospector found them one spring by the whitening bones of the decrowned monarch. They are over seven feet in spread, and weigh nearly a hundred pounds. They are beautifully curved and palmated. A noble crown for the King of Deer.

As for White Wolf, he is still an outlaw and the scourge of civilization. While he will not let his pack follow the trail of man if he can help it, yet he is strangely drawn to this wonderful creature who walks on two legs. This fire-god who handles with perfect fearlessness the strange brightness which is so appalling to the wilderness creatures.

White Wolf in some strange way feels the pull of the man creature. That old primeval domination which the first gray wolf felt when he crept into the camp of primitive man, and became the first dog. Thus it happens that on a winter's night when the huskies in camp, or in some lonely Indian

villages sit upon their tails and howl at the moon, a white figure, their white brother of the wilderness, who has not dared to venture in and become acquainted with their god, sits upon his tail on the distant hilltop and howls with them. But whether he is howling for them to come out and be a wolf with him, or because he wants to come into the village and be a dog with them who shall say?





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